United Nations S/PV.7433

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7433rd meeting

Friday, 24 April 2015, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Judeh/Mrs. Kawar[1]	(Jordan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Olguín Cigarroa
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mr. Zainudin
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Spain	Mr. Ybañez
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/264)

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15-11638 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/264)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Ms. Angelina Jolie Pitt, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/264, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014).

I now give the floor to Ms. Amos.

Ms. Amos: Since my first briefing to the Council on Syria some three years ago (see S/PV.6790), we have sat in this Chamber many times and borne witness to the spiraling violence and growing despair in the country. Each time, I speak of atrocity after atrocity, violation after violation, misery after misery. And despite the Council's unity on the appalling humanitarian consequences of the conflict and three resolutions demanding protection for civilians and full humanitarian access, the Government and armed and terrorist groups continue to kill, maim, rape, torture and take Syria to new lows that seemed unimaginable a few years ago.

People have become numb to figures that should, every day, shock our collective conscience and spur urgent action. More than 220,000 people have been killed and over 1 million injured. More than 7.6 million people are displaced within Syria and nearly 4 million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. People risk their lives if they stay and some when they leave, as we have seen with those who have drowned in the Mediterranean.

We need the numbness to the senseless violence and the apparent apathy to end. Violence has continued to escalate in a number of areas of the country. In the past weeks alone, well over 100,000 people have been displaced by fighting in Idlib — many of them for the second time. More than 1,500 people have been injured, but none of the three hospitals that were operating less than a month ago is functioning. There is nowhere for those seeking medical help to go.

And despite the Council's concerted action on the removal and destruction of chemical weapons, there are fresh allegations that chemical weapons have been used again in Idlib, killing and injuring civilians. Civilians in Aleppo also continue to be subjected to indiscriminate fire from the air and from underground, with barrel bombs dropped on opposition-controlled parts of Aleppo city and tunnel bombs exploding under Government-controlled districts. And it is civilians who are paying the heaviest price.

The Council has been briefed on the situation in Yarmouk, once a symbol of Syrian hospitality with refugees and host communities living side by side. Today, people have reached new levels of despair. Hundreds of thousands of people elsewhere in the country also remain besieged. Theirs is a daily struggle for survival as they remain trapped and out of our reach, subjected to collective punishment. Full and unimpeded humanitarian access remains a priority.

Humanitarian workers, often at great risk to themselves, are responding as best they can throughout the country including through cross border operations. On 26 March, a team of United Nations humanitarian workers and Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers delivering humanitarian supplies in Ar-Rastan was briefly detained by a non-State armed group. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has continued to inhibit the delivery of aid, and this month has even prevented polio vaccines from reaching hundreds of thousands of children under five years old.

The Government has finally approved a number of interagency convoys and critical food and education assessments, but there continue to be restrictions in aid delivery that limit our capacity to deliver. Last month, I called on the Council to remind Government security forces that all aid — particularly medical and surgical supplies — must be allowed on convoys. Despite these calls and the approval of civilian authorities, Government security forces again removed all surgical supplies from the trucks destined for Ar-Rastan in Homs governorate, depriving people of urgently needed treatments.

In resolution 2139 (2014), the Council expressed its intent to take further steps in the case of non-compliance with the resolution. Fourteen months later, there continues to be a shocking lack of respect for the most basic rules of international humanitarian law and a total absence of accountability. The failure to stop the violence has undermined the credibility of the Council and eroded confidence in the international community to take its responsibilities seriously. Billions of dollars have been pledged for humanitarian assistance, which we welcome, but the people of Syria, rightly, want more. They want an end to the war that has ravaged their country and destroyed lives and livelihoods.

I am appealing to the Council to look seriously at all the options at its disposal that could help to bring an end to the violence in Syria, stop the violations of international law, protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access. Some are practically difficult and others contentious but, given the conditions ordinary Syrians have to face, I ask the Council to consider the following.

First, it should demand that attacks on education and health facilities cease and that schools and hospitals become zones of peace. This is in line with resolution 2139 (2014), in paragraph 10 of which the Council

> "demands that all parties demilitarize medical facilities, schools and other civilian facilities and avoid establishing military positions in populated areas and desist from attacks directed against civilian objects".

Secondly, the Security Council should give a specific mandate to the International Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, looking specifically at the situation in besieged communities and the militarization and responsibility for attacks on medical and educational facilities. This should be done through the conduct of a fact-finding mission.

Thirdly, the Council should mandate the negotiation of humanitarian pauses and days of tranquillity.

Fourthly, it should send perpetrators a clear message that their crimes will not go unpunished and demonstrate to the Syrian people that there will be justice for the crimes committed against them. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Fifthly, it should enforce an arms embargo and targeted sanctions for violations of international humanitarian law and non-respect of humanitarian imperatives.

The Council has paid great attention to the humanitarian situation in Syria, but try as we may there is no humanitarian solution. The only solution is through political dialogue that reduces and ultimately ends the violence. Time is, however, running out for Syria and for the neighbouring countries that have taken on such a heavy burden on behalf of the international community. This is a crisis with potential global repercussions. I ask the Council to match its scale with an equally bold and courageous response.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Amos for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Guterres.

Mr. Guterres: We are all longing for a shred of hope and some good news, but since my last briefing to the Council (S/PV.7394) things have only gotten worse. The regional spillover effects of the Syrian conflict are taking on dramatic proportions. Fourteen million people are now displaced due to the interlinked crises in Syria and Iraq. Security threats to neighbouring countries are growing. As a result, we have been observing a steady deterioration in the protection space for Syrians trying to escape the conflict. Security concerns in the region have led to border management measures that also limit refugees' chances of reaching safety.

It is my duty as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to ask Governments to continue letting civilians seek protection, but the conflict and the resulting refugee influx, in the absence of sufficient international solidarity, have had such an enormous impact on neighbouring countries that we are now seeing a growing host fatigue, as the Ambassador

from Jordan said at our last meeting on this issue, and harsher policies imposed on refugees in some areas. There are increasing tensions between communities as local families struggle harder to cope the longer the conflict drags on.

As humanitarian agencies, we are doing the best we can, but what we are able to provide is far out of proportion with the needs. Living conditions across the region are deteriorating, and there is insufficient international support to cover even the most basic humanitarian necessities. The World Food Programme, our privileged partner, was forced to reduce its food voucher programme by 30 per cent, with far-reaching consequences for refugee families. Our own cash-assistance programme in Jordan, for instance, targets only those most at risk, but with current funding levels we reach just 22,000 households — less than two-thirds of those that should qualify, even with the strictest criteria. With an estimated 100,000 urban refugee families in Jordan living below the absolute poverty line, these interventions are little more than a drop in the ocean. As a result, dangerous coping mechanisms are on the rise, with more and more families forced to send their children to work or marry off their teenage daughters. There are also increasing reports of refugees resorting to survival sex to make ends meet.

With conditions in the neighbouring countries worsening and refugees growing increasingly desperate, more and more are attempting the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean. This month alone, twice as many people drowned as during all of 2013. We have long been calling on Europe to reinstate a robust search-and-rescue capacity and to focus on saving lives at sea, crack down on smugglers and traffickers, and create more legal avenues to safety for persons needing protection. These include expanded resettlement, humanitarian admission, flexible visa policies, family reunification, or academic and sponsorship schemes. The unbearable tragedy in the Mediterranean can be tackled only through genuine international cooperation. I sincerely hope that the measures announced in Brussels yesterday will represent a first step towards collective and effective European action.

One thing is clear — the situation in the region has become utterly unsustainable. After Iraq became so dramatically engulfed in the Syrian conflict with the attacks on Mosul and Tikrit last year, I do not know where the next disruptive shock will take place. I know only that it will come, and that things risk getting even worse. We all know that, ultimately, the only way to stop this from happening is a political solution to the conflict. There is no way around this, and it is high time that all those who have an influence on actors in Syria put aside their differences and come together to create the conditions to stop the fighting. But as long as that remains a distant prospect, we must do everything possible today to prevent a further deterioration of the regional situation — a descent that could otherwise become irreversible.

First, some immediate priorities must be addressed: providing more humanitarian aid to refugees and vulnerable host communities, and stopping the horrific loss of life in the Mediterranean. Secondly, there has to be massively increased support to the neighbouring countries. The funding announced in Kuwait last month to support the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan is an important signal of hope and must now be disbursed quickly. But it is also essential for the structural investment programmes presented by the host Governments to receive development funding from the international community. This requires a fundamental review of development cooperation policies. Because Lebanon and Jordan are middle-income countries, the World Bank is not allowed to give them grants to help deal with the severe demographic shock they have endured. We have to redress this and other serious inadequacies in the global development cooperation architecture.

Bilateral and multilateral development aid policies should include among their first priorities the countries that not only host large refugee populations, but are also fundamental pillars for regional stability and a first line of defence in ensuring the collective security of the international community. This is true for not only Syria's neighbours, but also for countries like Cameroon, the Niger and Chad that border north-eastern Nigeria, or for those around Somalia. The fact that some of these are middle-income countries should not exclude them from this priority.

The World Bank is now exploring various possibilities of making large-scale concessional financing available to Lebanon and Jordan, combining bilateral grants with its own usual loans. If that strategy shift can materialize, it could go a long way towards helping those countries cope, and even to supporting a more positive attitude towards refugees' self-reliance and economic participation. I very much hope that with Governments coming together later this year in such

forums as the annual meetings of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Group of 20 and the Group of Seven will support these and other proposals. Now is the time to adapt to today's fundamentally changed reality, in which conflict, stability and development are linked.

Thirdly, we must recognize the increasingly protracted nature of this refugee crisis. The ultimate priority objective of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees remains voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity, in line with what most refugees prefer, but we have to recognize that for Syrians this option is not immediately in sight. In the meantime, Syria's neighbours need help that is adequate to managing the vast economic, demographic and fiscal impact of the refugee influx. The extraordinary efforts made by Turkey, where Syrians now have access not only to free education and health care but also to the labour market, are an enormous step forward. With more support across the region, we could help turn the refugees' situation around from one of dependency and unsustainability to one in which their economic self-reliance becomes an option that enables them to contribute to their host societies' development.

The situation in the Middle East is a cancer that risks spreading and metastasizing. If things continue this way, we could see future developments spin out of control independent of our will, and with increasingly dangerous global consequences. We cannot let that happen. This is not just a question of solidarity with those who are bearing the brunt of this crisis. It is a matter of preserving the very foundation of who we are and ensuring our common interests.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Guterres for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Angelina Jolie Pitt.

Ms. Jolie Pitt: It is an honour for me to brief the Council today. I would like to thank His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jordan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and my colleagues from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme.

Since the Syria conflict began in 2011, I have made 11 visits to Syrian refugees in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Malta. I wish that some of the Syrians I have met could be here today. I think of the mother I met recently in a camp in Iraq, who could tell the Council what it is like to try to live after your young daughter is ripped from your family by armed men and taken as a sex slave. I think of Hala, one of six orphaned children living in a tent in Lebanon. She could tell us what it is like to share the responsibility for feeding your family at the age of 11, because your mother died in an air strike and your father is missing. And I think of Mr. Ayman, a doctor from Aleppo, who watched his wife and three-year-old daughter drown in the Mediterranean when a smugglers' boat, packed with hundreds of people, collapsed. He could tell us what it is like to try to keep your loved ones safe in a war zone, only to lose them in a desperate bid for safety after all other options have failed.

Any one of the Syrians I have met would speak more eloquently about the conflict than I ever could. Nearly 4 million Syrian refugees are victims of a conflict they have no part in. Yet they are stigmatized, unwanted and regarded as a burden. So I am here for them, because this is their United Nations. Here, all countries and all people are equal, from the smallest and most broken Member States to the free and powerful. The purpose of the United Nations is to prevent and end conflict, to bring countries together, find diplomatic solutions and save lives. We are failing to do that in Syria.

Responsibility for the conflict lies with the warring parties inside Syria, but the crisis is made worse by the division and indecision within the international community that prevents the Security Council from fulfilling its responsibilities. In 2011, the Syrian refugees I met were full of hope. They asked me to tell people what was happening to them, trusting that the truth alone would guarantee international action. When I returned, hope was turning into anger, the anger of the man who held up his little baby, asking me, "Is this a terrorist? Is my son a terrorist?" On my last visit, in February, anger had subsided into resignation, misery and the bitter question, "Why are we, the Syrian people, not worth saving?"

To be a Syrian caught up in this conflict is to be cut off from every law and principle designed to protect innocent life. International humanitarian law prohibits torture, starvation and the targeting of schools and hospitals, but those crimes are happening in Syria every day. The Security Council has powers to address those threats to international peace and security, but those powers go unused. The United Nations has adopted the concept of the responsibility to protect, which says that when a State cannot protect its people the international

community will not stand by. But in Syria we are standing by.

The problem is not a lack of information. We know in excruciating detail what is happening in Yarmouk, Aleppo and Homs. The problem is a lack of political will. We cannot look at Syria, and the evil that has arisen from the ashes of indecision, and think that this is not the lowest point in the world's inability to protect and defend the innocent. I say this as someone who is proud to have been part of the United Nations system for 13 years. I do not think enough people realize just how many people are fed, sheltered, protected and educated by the United Nations every day of the year. But all of that good is undermined by the message being sent in Syria, which is that laws can be flouted, chemical weapons can be used, hospitals can be bombed, aid can be withheld and civilians starved with impunity.

So, on behalf of Syria's refugees, I make three pleas to the international community. The first is an appeal for unity. It is time for the Security Council to work as one to end the conflict and reach a settlement that also brings justice and accountability for the Syrian people. It is very encouraging to see ministerial representation from Jordan, Spain and Malaysia here today. But I think we would all like to see the Foreign Ministers from all the Security Council member countries here, working on a political solution for Syria as a matter of urgency. In the past few months, we have seen intensive diplomacy at work elsewhere in the region. Now let us see what is possible for the people of Syria. And while these debates are important, I also urge the Security Council to visit Syrian refugees, to see at first hand their suffering and the impact it is having on the region. Those refugees cannot come to the Council, so I ask that the Council go to them. Please.

Secondly, I echo what has been said about the support from Syria's neighbours, which are making an extraordinary contribution. It is sickening to see thousands of refugees drowning on the doorstep of the world's wealthiest continent. No one risks the lives of their children in such a way except out of utter desperation. If we cannot end the conflict, we have an inescapable moral duty to help refugees and provide legal avenues to safety.

Thirdly, the barbarism of those who inflict systematic sexual violence demands a much greater response from the international community. We must send a signal that we are serious about accountability for such crimes, and that is the only hope for establishing any deterrence. So I call on Member States to begin preparations now so that Syrian women are fully represented in future peace negotiations, in accordance with multiple Security Council resolutions.

And if I may make a wider final point to conclude my remarks, the crisis in Syria illustrates the fact that our inability to find diplomatic solutions causes mass displacement and traps millions of people in exile, statelessness and displacement. Fifty-two million people are forcibly displaced today — a sea of excluded humanity. And while our priority must be ending the Syria conflict, we must also broaden out the discussion to this much wider problem. Our times will be defined not by the crises themselves, but by the way we pull together as an international community to address them.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Jolie Pitt for her statement.

I give the floor to Ms. Cousin.

Ms. Cousin: I thank you for drawing the world's attention back to the victims of Syria's ongoing conflict.

Since the beginning of this crisis, the World Food Programme (WFP) has worked to address the daily food and nutrition needs of four million people inside Syria and of 1.9 million people outside Syria. In 2012, I made my first visit to Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp. The WFP was working there with our partners at that time to provide hot meals to the newly arrived and monthly food rations to the then 17,000 Syrians who called the camp home. As I was walking through the camp, I met women who had walked for miles carrying small children in search of shelter, food and safety. I met children who had already been out of school for weeks or for months — and that was in 2012. I met husbands who were angry because conflict had forced them to leave their farms, their livestock and their small businesses; angry because they could now feed their families only by standing in lines for food, water and bread.

Because we recognized the importance of bread in the diets of Syrian families, we also began baking and distributing 130,000 pieces of pita bread per day, in addition to our usual rations. As I walked through the camp, a man began following me and shouting at me in Arabic. I asked the translator to find out what the man was shouting. He began shouting louder and crumbling a piece of bread in his hand. The translator said, "He is angry about the bread. He asks if you would feed this

terrible bread to your own children". I said, "Ask him what is wrong with the bread". The man shouted back to me and the crowd that was now growing, "This is Jordanian bread, not Syrian bread". He shouted "This is not our bread. This is bad bread". I said, "Ask this man what his business was in Syria". He said, "I am a Syrian baker".

The WFP Syrian response team is working across the region to appropriately meet the food and nutrition needs of the most vulnerable victims of the Syrian crisis. In the five host countries, we are working outside Syria to serve refugees in camps like Zaatari, as well as refugees hosted by community neighborhoods, and we are working inside Syria to serve the displaced in opposition, as well as in regime-held areas — the whole of Syria.

As Council members well know, the longer this crisis continues the more vulnerable its victims become. People suffer and die from starvation and malnutrition or from stunted child development; those deprived of nutrition suffer the long-term consequences of deteriorating health and broad despair. Those inside Syria's highest-priority districts, with the highest concentration of displaced people, live without livelihoods, without an income and unable to meet their basic needs.

Before the conflict began, Syria was a net food exporter, but drought and conflict have put food increasingly out of reach. Food is harder to produce and harder to import. Inside Syria, wheat is twice as expensive as it was before the crisis; rice is four times as expensive; bread prices are up 55 per cent. As a result, any food available is too often, for too many, inaccessible. Some 6.8 million people require critical food assistance — more than half a million more than at this time last year.

The decline in food security and the destruction and weakening of water and health services have created a serious nutritional crisis. Four million Syrian women and children require preventative and curative nutrition services. Families face and make impossible decisions to find and access food. Parents pull their children out of school to search for work.Food becomes part of negotiations to marry off young daughters or to release children to fight in armed groups. Gandhi said "to the mother of a hungry child, a piece of bread is the face of God". Gandhi was right. We must not let that piece of bread be delivered by an armed extremist.

We regularly monitor to ensure the appropriate distribution of WFP food. Despite our diligence, we did have one widely reported incident where a small amount of WFP food was stolen by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham and distributed with much publicity on social media. Inside Syria, negotiating humanitarian access for distribution and monitoring within besieged areas can involve up to 50 parties. Determining which routes to take, what times to go, the quantities to be delivered and even the land mines to avoid can take anything from 10 days to 10 months. Where we reach today, we too often cannot reach tomorrow. Parts of Idlib and Ar-Raqqa, once regularly accessible, are now unreachable. We have not reached Moadamiya in over a year.

The Council enabled us to make regular cross-line and cross-border deliveries. In fact, last month alone, we were able to reach an additional 528,000 people using the border crossings provided through resolution 2165 (2014). Expanding cross-border activities depends not only on our ability to safely cross but also on adequate financial resources. Our 2015 plan is to reach 4 million people inside Syria and 2.1 million more outside, but funding shortfalls are putting this already limited assistance in jeopardy. Current funding commitments do not reflect the humanitarian needs of this prolonged conflict. Because of funding shortfalls, as noted by the High Commissioner, we have been forced to cut the family food basket inside Syria by 30 per cent. Those cuts have a significant potential nutritional impact and can lead to protein energy malnutrition.

Funding shortfalls also limit plans such as those with UNICEF to reach pregnant and lactating women and to provide an integrated school feeding programme. If we fail to provide the school meals that bring children back to school and keep them in school, we will miss the opportunity to teach them different lessons from those this conflict teaches, detrimentally impacting their futures and the future of the region.

As the Council knows and as the High Commissioner highlighted, the Syrian refugee crisis threatens stability across the region. In the five neighbouring countries, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon, refugees now compete with their hosts for homes, employment, water and food. I must warn the Council that when we reduce food access operations, we reduce stability. We shift the burden from the international community to host communities and host Governments — communities like those in Jordan, where participation in the

regional voucher programme, which provides choice to beneficiaries and cash to businesses in host communities, has been severely limited. Some 190,000 Syrian refugees living in extreme poverty received food assistance worth $28 per person per month. Because of funding shortfalls, we were forced to cut assistance by half for almost a quarter of a million more refugees living in absolute poverty. Now, they must try to feed their families on $14 per person per month, limiting their ability to purchase nutritious food.

We also made cuts in Lebanon, where the refugee crisis has increased unemployment and overstretched national health, education and infrastructure services. A decrease in targeted donor funding forced us to reduce not only the number of people served but also the level of assistance we provide to those we serve. We will also reduce the number of people we serve in Egypt, Iraq and Turkey. Over the coming months, 400,000 refugees across the entire region will be completely cut from receiving food assistance. When we announced the reductions in Jordan, our hotlines were overwhelmed.

Thousands of appeal calls come in each day — calls from families that have exhausted their resources and feel abandoned by all of us. One woman said, "I cannot stay if I cannot feed my children". Families like hers consider once unthinkable options, such as returning to Syria or illegally trying to make the dangerous voyage across the Mediterranean into Europe. Without reliable access to food, people become easy targets for traffickers and extremists. Without reliable access to food, the region and its children are in danger.

The conflict rages on without a political solution. Inside Syria, we ask all parties — the Government and the opposition groups, as well as the armed actors — to provide the necessary humanitarian access. And we ask for the Council's support because, despite important improvements in access facilitated by the Council and Member States, we must do more. We must maintain essential life-saving food access and nutrition programmes, and we must ensure that we meet the nutritional and educational needs of Syria's children. To prevent the lack of access to food from becoming a political issue, the length and complexity of the crisis mean that we must increase — not reduce — financial investments in food and nutritional assistance.

Until we deliver the political solutions that will create peace, we must fully implement the humanitarian solutions that will create hope and stability across the region. Failure to do so will haunt all of us for decades to come. We cannot ask parents to raise their children in a region without food — a region without peace. We cannot leave parents to pull their children out of school in order to search for food, work or protection from armed groups. We cannot expect parents to raise children in a region where picking up a gun is easier than picking up a book. Without the support of the Council, there will be no food security and without food security there is no security. We can do better; we must do better.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Cousin for her briefing.

After consultations among Council members, I have been authorized to make the following statement on their behalf.

"The Security Council recalls its resolutions 2042 (2012), 2043 (2012), 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2175 (2014), 2191 (2014) and its presidential statements of 3 August 2011 and 2 October 2013.

"The Security Council reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and all other States affected by the Syrian conflict, and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

"The Security Council expresses grave alarm at the significant and rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, including at the fact that over 220,000 people have been killed, including well over 10,000 children, since the beginning of the conflict; around half of the population has been forced to flee their homes, including over 3.9 million who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, among which are nearly 2.1 million children; and that more than 12.2 million people in Syria require urgent humanitarian assistance including 440,000 civilians in besieged areas.

"The Security Council demands that all parties to the Syrian domestic conflict immediately put an end to all forms of violence and reiterates that all parties to the Syrian domestic conflict, in particular the Syrian authorities, must comply with their applicable obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and respect human rights, and reiterates its demand that they fully and immediately implement the provisions of its resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), particularly

through facilitating the expansion of humanitarian relief operations and the immediate delivery of humanitarian assistance to hard-to-reach and besieged areas across borders and conflict lines.

"The Security Council is alarmed that the Syrian crisis has become the largest humanitarian emergency crisis in the world today, threatening peace and security in the region with diverse implications on the neighbouring countries and the displacement of millions of Syrians into those countries, and calls for addressing further spill-over of the conflict in Syria into the neighbouring countries.

"The Security Council further calls for coordinated international support to the neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees, at their request, in addressing legitimate security concerns and ensuring the safety and security of host communities and refugees, and countering radicalization through, inter alia, the provision of support for effective border management and internal security measures.

"The Security Council reiterates its deep appreciation for the significant and admirable efforts that have been made by the countries of the region, notably Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt, to accommodate Syrian refugees and is mindful of the immense costs and multifaceted challenges incurred by these countries as a consequence of the crisis.

"The Security Council notes with deep concern that the crisis in Syria has had social, demographic, environmental and economic effects on neighbouring countries; which have exacerbated vulnerabilities; overstretched limited resources and basic social services such as health, water, sanitation, housing capacities, energy and education; aggravated unemployment; diminished trade and investment; and affected regional stability and security.

"The Security Council emphasizes the strain placed on host country education systems by the inflow of refugees and that additional resources will be required to help the 600,000 children outside the school system access quality education.

"The Security Council underlines the risk of further regional destabilization if the conflict, refugee crisis and the needs of the host countries are not adequately addressed. The Security Council stresses the importance of funding the humanitarian and development responses to the refugee crisis, providing support for national response plans, addressing the humanitarian needs of refugees, in particular women and children, both in camps and urban areas and through capacity-building and technical support, strengthening the resilience of host countries and communities as components of stabilizing the region, preventing radicalization and countering the threat of terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters.

"The Security Council notes with concern that the international response to the Syrian and regional crisis continues to fall short of meeting the needs as assessed by host Governments and the United Nations, and urges all Member States, based on burden-sharing principles, to support the United Nations and the countries of the region, including by adopting medium- and long-term responses to alleviate the impact on communities, providing increased, flexible and multi-year predictable funding as well as increasing resettlement efforts, and taking note in this regard of the Berlin Communiqué of 28 October 2014.

"The Security Council urges donors, international financial institutions and United Nations agencies to consider financing instruments that effectively meet the unique needs of middle-income countries impacted by the Syrian conflict and address its massive structural impact on neighbouring countries.

"The Security Council emphasizes the importance of complying with applicable international humanitarian law and refugee law, promoting and protecting the human rights of all people affected by the crisis and respecting the United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian emergency assistance, welcomes efforts by host countries in this regard and urges Member States to continue to help them in this effort.

"The Security Council welcomes the convening of the third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, generously hosted by Kuwait on 31 March 2015, and the $3.6 billion pledges made, and calls on all Member States to ensure the timely disbursement of pledges.

"The Security Council emphasizes that the humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate

in the absence of a political solution, expresses its full support for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and reiterates that the only sustainable solution to the current crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, with a view to full implementation of the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 endorsed as annex II of its resolution 2118 (2013)."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2015/10.

I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

In the context of today's special meeting on the tragedy in Syria, it is my duty to say that throughout history — and still today — my country, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, has been a safe harbour for the countries of our region, taking in displaced people from their lands when war or calamity has struck.

Today's meeting coincides with the start of the fifth year of the Syrian crisis. Over the past four years, we have seen an escalation in killing, destruction, terrorism and lawlessness, which has forced millions of Syrians into exodus, both inside and outside their country. We in Jordan are at the forefront of this crisis, with the number of refugees in our country swelling to 1.5 million refugees to date, although before the crisis there were already 750,000 Syrians living in Jordan. This overall number represents 21 per cent of the total population of Jordan.

Undoubtedly, the four-year duration of this crisis so far and the absence of a political solution have forced Jordan to turn away from dealing with the immediate impact of the crisis and led it to attempt to manage the flow of a large number of refugees who need to be hosted on an extended basis. This situation has had many repercussions on us, affecting, as it does, Jordanian society and the Jordanian State in terms of infrastructure, services, education, health, energy and water, putting acute pressure on the country's already limited resources.

In our view, finding a political solution has always been the only way out of the crisis, particularly with regard to humanitarian assistance and the problem of refugees and displaced persons. Such a political solution should meet the needs and aspirations of the Syrian people and lead them to a new reality in which all the diverse groups that form the Syrian people play an active part in restoring the social fabric of the country and in which the displaced feel safe enough to return home.

The significant impact that hosting the refugees has had on Jordan can be seen in the education sector, where, in the 2014-2015 school year, we have hosted 140,000 Syrian students. This has been a major burden on us and has led to a deterioration in our entire education sector. We have had to establish two school sessions per day in order to accommodate such a large number of students and, even then, thousands of school children from Syria could not be accommodated at all owing to the lack of capacity to receive them.

Furthermore, since the start of the Syrian crisis, Jordan has seen an increase of 22 per cent in water consumption, and as the Council knows, we are a very poor country in terms of water.

With regard to health care, our hospitals and public medical centres treated 700,000 Syrians in 2014, which represents an increase of 219,000 cases from the previous year.

Those examples from the three sectors are replicated in other sectors in Jordan, especially in the labour market. This is a crisis that touches the Jordanian people and the countries that host refugees very closely. These situations lead to tensions and friction between the refugees and the host societies. They lead to an imbalance, which threatens the peace and security of the host communities and could result in the situation spilling across borders, which could, in turn, threaten international peace and security. The severity of these potential outcomes compels the Council to seriously consider these challenges and the potential development of these situations. International agencies and donors should respond more effectively to the needs of the refugees, but also to the needs of the host countries as they seek to alleviate the burden created by the inflow of refugees.

As we enter the fifth year of this crisis in Jordan, we continue to provide services to our brothers and sisters from Syria who have come to our country seeking refuge. We provide them with everything possible, and we fulfil that role on behalf of all humankind.

Humankind as a whole is also responsible for meeting the needs of the refugees. The Jordanian Government has put in place an emergency plan for 2015 and has adopted best practices in assessing the

needs of the refugees and the host communities. Their needs have all been integrated into a single plan that includes all the ministries, United Nations agencies, donors and local and international non-governmental organizations. The plan projects the cost of our relief efforts for this year to be $3 billion. The plan includes options for financing, such as direct support, trust funds and other options that are appropriate for the specific requirements of this crisis. We have signed an agreement establishing the trust fund to respond to the crisis in Syria and reduce the burden created by the increased needs.

Dealing with the refugees outside Syria is intrinsically connected to the situation in Syria. Since the beginning of the crisis, therefore, Jordan adopted an approach aimed at balancing the needs of the refugees in Jordan and the needs of the Syrian population in Syria. We have gone to great lengths in that regard. Through our membership in the Security Council we have effectively taken part in the adoption of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), concerning humanitarian assistance to Syrians in Syria. Myriad humanitarian convoys have been sent to Syria, but these measures are partial and temporary and will never provide a comprehensive solution to the crisis in Syria or to the problem of refugees. A lasting solution that addresses the roots of the problems can be achieved only through a political solution, as I said at the beginning of my statement, based on the provisions of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). The absence of a political solution after four years of crisis compels the international community to address the refugee problem by taking a long-term perspective and considering the development needs of the host countries, as their development is vital in terms of their capacities to host refugees. That is the case in Jordan.

In conclusion, allow me to express Jordan's gratitude and appreciation to all the countries and international organizations, people and bodies that have provided us with assistance in assuming the burden of hosting the refugees. In particular, we are grateful to Kuwait for hosting the three conferences aimed at appealing to the international community to assume its responsibility and at expanding donors' opportunities to effectively contribute to finding a solution to the problem, until the refugees voluntarily choose to return to their homes, which will happen only if a political solution is reached. I urge all representatives to make every possible effort to achieve that goal.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank you, Minister Judeh, for dedicating today's meeting to a crisis that so urgently demands the world's attention. I also thank our briefers, Under-Secretary-General Amos, High Commissioner Guterres, Executive Director Cousin and Special Envoy Jolie, for their appropriately stark, firm and extremely moving briefings.

The United States would also like to recognize the dedicated humanitarian workers serving in United Nations agencies and other organizations who are putting their lives on the line to get assistance to people in the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. They are people like the two Syrian Arab Red Crescent workers who were killed on 3 April while retrieving bodies of the deceased and preparing shelters for the displaced in Idlib, and people who are constantly looking for ways around the seemingly endless obstacles to delivering vital aid, like the World Health Organization staff members who took advantage of a six-hour ceasefire last month in Aleppo to deliver medical supplies across the lines. They reached 5,000 people — using pull-carts.

In Deir ez-Zour, approximately 228,000 residents are caught between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which has encircled the city and systematically cut off humanitarian access, and regime forces, which are preventing people from leaving. On 13 April, a one-year-old infant reportedly starved to death, and non-governmental organizations are receiving reports of young girls trading sexual acts for bread. While the International Committee of the Red Cross was able to reach Deir ez-Zour with three airlifts in recent days, the first aid deliveries to the besieged city in nearly a year, residents of all ages remain on the brink of starvation.

As ghastly as it is, the situation in Deir ez-Zour is not an outlier. We are all well aware of the ongoing crisis in Yarmouk, where many thousands of Palestinians are still trapped and cut off from vital assistance. In Yarmouk, it is regime forces that are doing the blockading, as they have done for more than two years. Since moving into Yarmouk weeks ago, ISIL and other armed groups have only exacerbated the suffering of residents by further limiting their movements.

As several of the briefers noted, the United Nations estimates that 440,000 civilians in Syria are living in besieged areas where most aid cannot get in and most people cannot get out. Only 4 per cent of people living in besieged areas received food deliveries last month. Health assistance reached less than one-third of 1 per cent — that is, 0.3 per cent of the civilians living in besieged areas.

Siege is just one tactic used to prevent vital humanitarian aid from reaching people in need. According to the most recent United Nations report (S/2015/264), nine World Health Organization requests to deliver health assistance to locations in Aleppo, Dar'a, Idlib and other governerates have gone unanswered by the regime. While life-saving medical supplies sit in warehouses, people die on operating tables in crowded, ill-equipped field hospitals and even in their homes, all from wounds and illnesses that could be treated with adequate resources. Meanwhile, 19 requests for inter-agency conveys, which sought to reach the hardest-hit areas, are still pending approval by the regime. Many have been stuck in limbo for months, exacerbating suffering and even causing death by bureaucratic delay. What possible excuse is there not to respond to a United Nations request? There is no excuse.

Such tactics demonstrate the immense gap between the demands of the Council and the actions on the ground by the parties to this conflict, particularly the Al-Assad regime. Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) direct all Syrian parties to enable the immediate and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations and their implementing partners. Yet, the regime and ISIL are deliberately blocking such aid. Rather than fulfil their obligation to protect civilians, both ISIL and the regime deliberately target civilians to advance their aims. We are past the point of highlighting or lamenting that enduring gap. We must come together to close it. The survival of millions of Syrians demands it, not to mention the credibility of the Council's word. Our resolutions are currently being ridiculed by the Syrian regime.

In the immediate term, aid must be allowed to reach besieged areas, and people must be allowed to leave besieged areas. Imagine being trapped. Just imagine being a parent and being trapped. International monitoring is crucial to ensuring that civilians leaving such areas are not arbitrarily detained, separated from their families or harmed in any way as happened on 14 February 2014, when hundreds of people disappeared as they passed through Government-controled areas while leaving the besieged city of Homs.

Syria's neighbours have shown remarkable generosity in helping those trapped in Syria, as well as those who have managed to escape. Of the nearly 4 million people who have fled Syria, Turkey has taken in a staggering 1.7 million refugees. One in every four people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee, and this unprecedented influx has demanded that countries take robust measures to accommodate the new populations. In Jordan, for example, where the population of some northern cities has doubled since the arrival of more than 620,000 Syrian refugees, the Government has worked with development and humanitarian groups to come up with a comprehensive plan to respond to refugees' diverse needs, from health and education to security and drinking water.

While Syria's neighbours have already welcomed unprecedented numbers of refugees, we strongly urge those countries to keep their borders open and ease restrictions that prevent the most vulnerable from reaching refuge. If the international community is going to ask more of Syria's neighbours — neighbours that have already done so much — we cannot allow them to shoulder the impact of sheltering millions of refugees alone. That is why, in addition to the $556 million that the United States has provided to Jordan to support refugee programmes and host communities since the start of the Syrian conflict, we announced our intention in February to increase annual bilateral assistance from $660 million to $1 billion over the next three years, given the extraordinary needs generated by this crisis and the extraordinary generosity of Syria's neighbours.

In addition to helping Syria's neighbours, all countries, including the United States, must welcome displaced Syrians in greater numbers. As the recent catastrophes involving refugees — many of whom have been Syrian — attempting to cross the Mediterranean demonstrate, people are willing to take tremendous risks to escape the brutal violence in their countries. Just this week, Turkey's coast guard rescued 30 Syrians aboard a sinking boat trying to reach Greece.

The disparity between what the international community is providing and what the Syrian people need is growing. At the end of last month, the Secretary-General convened a conference, together with the Government of Kuwait, to raise funds toward the

$8.4 billion that the United Nations needs to respond to the crisis. Only $3.6 billion has been pledged toward that goal. It is critically important that all countries, including members of the Council, make more substantive contributions, and it is important that those countries that have pledged actually deliver promptly. The United States announced a new $507 million pledge in Kuwait last month, which brought our total contributions to Syria since the crisis began to $3.2 billion. Today, in response to the devastating crisis in Yarmouk, we are announcing an additional $6 million in aid to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to provide urgent assistance, both for the many thousands still trapped in Yarmouk and for other Palestinians and Syrians receiving a lifeline from the Agency.

Even as we seek to fill those gaps, we must not lose sight of the foundational reason that Syria's population needs humanitarian assistance, and that is the Al-Assad regime: a regime that continues to torture, gas, barrel-bomb and starve its own people; a regime whose brutality fed the rise of ISIL and other violent extremist groups in Syria; a regime that, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, killed an average of five children per day last month alone. Let us be clear: ISIL could disappear tomorrow and the regime would still block United Nations conveys, ignore United Nations appeals and Security Council resolutions, torture detainees in its prisons and use barrel bombs and chlorine-based chemical weapons to attack civilians. Partnering with a regime of that kind would not help us defeat violent extremist groups; it would only strengthen their appeal. The only viable political solution to the crisis is one without al-Assad in power. A political push at the highest levels and a sincere and united effort to secure a political transition are urgently needed and, of course, long overdue.

In conclusion, *National Geographic* magazine recently organized a photography camp in Jordan for teenage refugees from Syria — 20 children, ages 13 to 15, spent a week, using cameras and words to tell their stories. A slide show of some of their photos is available online, and I urge everyone to look at it. A common thread cuts across the testimonies of the young Syrians — they want to go home. One participant, 14-year-old Abdullah, fled to Jordan from Dar'a three years ago. For an assignment to take a self-portrait, he took one with his face covered — a way, he said, to make himself anonymous. Speaking about his future, Abdullah said,

> "I hope to become an engineer and rebuild Syria, house by house, and build the biggest hospitals, the biggest mosques, the biggest schools, build bakeries and rebuild our home. I hope to become a good engineer, God willing, we will rebuild Syria the best we can. We are going to make Syria the most beautiful country and restore the life in it."

Abdullah and so many young people from his generation are waiting to go home and rebuild. Who would deny them that opportunity? Who better than Syria's young to motivate and unite us, the members of the Security Council, to work relentlessly to enforce our own resolutions in order to mitigate the suffering of the Syrian people and to find a political solution to this devastating conflict?

Mr. Ybáñez (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank and congratulate the Jordanian presidency on bringing the Council's attention to the impact of the humanitarian crisis in Syria on its neighbouring countries. While affecting each of those countries, the implications of that conflict also have an impact on regional and global peace and security. Consequently, the challenges that Jordan faces affect us all, and we must collectively contribute to providing a response.

The presidential statement that we have adopted today (S/PRST/2015/10) provides clear recognition and firm support for the extraordinary efforts undertaken by countries such as Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey to host the 3.9 million refugees who have fled their homes since the beginning of the conflict that is devastating Syria. They include 600,000 children, whose basic and educational needs are being barely covered or not covered at all and who require urgent attention. The High Commissioner, Mr. Guterres, his Special Envoy, Ms. Jolie Pitt, and Ms. Cousin of the United Nations World Food Programme have eloquently described the plight of the Syrian refugees and the challenges that their presence poses for the host countries. We appreciate their briefings and, above all, the extraordinary work they do as humanitarian workers.

We are witnessing the greatest refugee crisis of our time. It is a drama that crosses borders and challenges the conscience of the entire international community. It is, above all, a drama that has 3.9 million faces and names. Let us put ourselves in their place, and try to imagine spending five years of our lives uprooted by force from our living environment, often from the closeness of our loved ones, surviving in

precarious material conditions — five years taken from our professional careers, five years stolen from our children's education, five years of our lives living without hope that the situation is going to change in the immediate future. That is, until we are able to find a political solution to the Syrian conflict, which we have not done. That is our failure and our shame.

What can we do in the meantime? The neighbouring countries, which have received most of the Syrian refugees, are giving us an example of solidarity and humanity under conditions that test the resilience of their own societies. As I said, we cannot and we must not leave them to manage alone in that effort. We are not facing a solely humanitarian crisis, but also a situation that undermines the development efforts of the neighbouring host countries. It is vital to keep in mind the link between the two dimensions, humanitarian and development, when considering how we can more effectively aid those countries.

At the recent donor conference for Syria, held in Kuwait on 31 March, we were able to see at first hand the magnitude of the amounts needed to respond adequately to the crisis and to support neighbouring countries in the two dimensions just mentioned. Certainly, the generosity of many donors has provided the opportunity to gather approximately $3.6 billion, but we are still far from covering the $8.4 billion that the United Nations requires. Overall in that regard, we must do more. I am speaking about current and potential donors, as well as funding from international financial institutions. Those institutions could consider the use of financial instruments adapted to the neighbouring host countries' needs, taking into consideration that they are middle-income countries, whose access to funding under more favourable conditions would be restricted.

The situation of the Syrian refugees is one aspect of the broader Syrian humanitarian crisis. We are facing a crisis that affects, within a country of more than 22 million people, 7.6 million who are internally displaced. Those figures are from the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2015/264), which Under-Secretary-General Amos presented. We appreciate her presence among us and value her dedication and valorous efforts in extraordinary measure. Those are figures that, again to our shame, have been repeated and have continued to increase month by month over the past years. The Council's actions through resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) have, since their adoption, undoubtedly contributed to improving the lot of the Syrian population.

But that is not enough. Instead, in debate after debate we find that the most important requirements of the resolutions on protection and humanitarian assistance remain unfulfilled in their entirety. We are especially but not only concerned about the systematic violations of the medical neutrality principle and the removal of medical and sanitary supplies from humanitarian convoys that are essential to civilian populations. It is necessary, therefore, to reflect on how to ensure urgent and effective compliance with the resolutions. Above all, it is necessary and urgent to act.

As a member of the Council, Spain has insisted in recent statements on practical measures to realize that goal. One measure in particular relates to an area of humanitarian action noted as a priority in the Secretary-General's reports. I am referring to access to areas under siege, where, according to available data, 440,000 people live in poverty and where humanitarian access has not gotten through or has opened very sporadically in recent months. One such area is the Yarmouk refugee camp, on which the Council held two consultations this month and where the situation has been described as one of the deepest circles of hell for the thousands of civilians still trapped inside.

The action proposed by Spain, along with other countries working on the humanitarian dossier for Syria, is the launch of a mission to assess the humanitarian needs in the besieged areas. That mission could at the same time facilitate humanitarian access. It may be late for Yarmouk, but it is not for the rest of the people living in similar conditions elsewhere in Syria. Such a mission could be at a level that the Council determines, but it would in any case have to be supported by a clear mandate that included three essential elements. First, it must appeal to the parties concerned not to obstruct it. Secondly, we must determine its level and composition. Thirdly, the expected results must be delivered within a defined time frame and be reported in a timely manner to the Council. I am outlining its design for the Council's consideration, and the Spanish delegation is ready to begin work on it immediately with other Council members.

I conclude by reiterating my congratulations and thanks to the Jordanian presidency for convening this timely and much needed debate.

Mr. Zainuddin (Malaysia): I wish to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his monthly report to the Council (S/2015/264) and to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Baroness Valerie Amos, for her briefing to the Council on the humanitarian situation and the implementation of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) regarding humanitarian assistance and access into Syria. I also wish to thank the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Ms. Ertharin Cousin, for her briefing on the work of the WFP and its partners regarding its monthly food assistance programme in Syria. I further thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, for his updates to the Council on the situation of the Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries.

We are also very privileged to have heard a briefing by Ms. Angelina Jolie Pitt, the Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who has devoted much effort to raising the international community's awareness of the plight of the Syrian refugees. We share Ms. Jolie Pitt's concerns that too many innocent people are paying the price of the conflict in Syria and that the international community must step up and do more.

Despite the international community's efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, the on-the-ground humanitarian situation has, we deeply regret to say, deteriorated significantly. Indiscriminate attacks and the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure by both Government and armed opposition forces have continued without respite. We are perplexed that the parties to the conflict, each claiming to be representing or fighting for the Syrian people, are seemingly oblivious to the suffering and destruction that they are inflicting on the Syrian people. The ever-increasing numbers of civilian deaths and injuries, displaced persons and refugees are evidence of the destructive toll inflicted by this conflict.

While the humanitarian statistics may speak for themselves, the Council must continue to speak for the victims of the conflict, namely the millions of Syrians who continue to suffer. The strategy by the parties to the conflict of besieging and starving entire cities, designed to ensure the submission and surrender of whole populations, has added another horrifying dimension to the Syrian conflict. It is appalling that the parties to the conflict have increasingly employed this practice as a strategy of war, one that we condemn unequivocally.

The barbarity of such strategies is unprecedented and unparalleled in modern history. Entire populations not only face death and injury, they are also subjected to inhumane and horrific conditions in the course of their daily survival. When we think about those physically trapped and besieged in cities and deprived of and denied basic essentials such as food, water, health care and medicines, it is beyond our imagination to comprehend the daily struggle and hardship they have to go through in order to survive.

Despite the adoption of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), we are deeply concerned that the delivery of humanitarian aid, especially when it requires access across borders and combat lines, continues to encounter security and administrative obstacles. While we acknowledge the Syrian Government's cooperation in facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid, we believe that the continued administrative obstacles it places in the way of lifesaving humanitarian aid are becoming increasingly unsustainable. The prohibition against bringing in medical and surgical supplies intended for the treatment of the already suffering Syrian population is unacceptable. The international community cannot tolerate such obstacles any longer. Such humanitarian aid and supplies must be allowed to reach their intended destinations and recipients.

We commend the work of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and other humanitarian partners to ensure the delivery of aid to the Syrian people in the face of an extremely challenging security environment. The dedication and commitment of their personnel is highly admirable. In the light of the obstacles put in the way of the delivery of humanitarian aid and relief, intentionally or otherwise, we are of the view that the international community's concerns should be reflected in continued monitoring by the Council in order to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid. The Council can ill afford to sit back and simply hope that the parties to the conflict will respect international law, international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions.

The escalation of the situation in besieged Yarmouk, near Damascus, has further sensitized the international community to the humanitarian situation of those in besieged cities. In what was once a refuge and safe haven for more than 160,000 Palestinian refugees, the worsening conflict has now trapped the approximately

18,000 Palestinians remaining in Yarmouk. It is deeply disheartening for those who had sought refuge in Syria to now be embroiled in and directly affected by the conflict. But this is not unique to Yarmouk, as many other cities throughout Syria are facing similar situations. We cannot in good conscience continue to allow the people in these besieged cities to suffer, whether in Yarmouk, Aleppo, Homs or elsewhere in Syria. We recognize that the Government of Syria has the primary responsibility for the protection of its people. We hold the view, however, that in the light of the Government's continued inability, unwillingness and failure to fulfil its obligations, the Council has an imperative to ensure that civilians are protected and that efforts undertaken to enable the organization of humanitarian pauses for the delivery of aid, the establishment of humanitarian corridors and the safe passage of civilians out of besieged areas.

We fully acknowledge that the humanitarian situation in Syria is intrinsically linked to a political settlement of the conflict. We therefore remain hopeful that the parties to the conflict will positively consider the freeze proposal made by Mr. Staffan de Mistura, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria. Nevertheless, there is mounting frustration in the international community about the fact that, despite its efforts, the parties to the conflict have remained obstinate about finding a sustainable solution to the conflict. Malaysia reiterates its view that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict. We believe firmly that the future of Syria should be determined by the Syrian people themselves through a Syrian-led political process. In that regard, we are supportive of efforts to support, promote, encourage and facilitate an inclusive political transitional process aimed at fostering national reconciliation in Syria.

We cannot allow our humanity to be lulled or desensitized by the horrors of the Syrian conflict. Neither can we allow our humanity to be corrupted by accepting that such horrors are corollaries of or to be expected in the course of conflict. In the light of the ongoing and worsening humanitarian situation in Syria, we have an imperative, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, to ensure that international law, international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions are respected by the parties to the conflict.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): New Zealand is grateful to Jordan for presiding over today's debate. Jordan's positive role in the region, and the generosity it has shown to Syrian refugees, is highly appreciated.

It is increasingly apparent that the burden of the Syrian conflict for Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq is unsustainable. We cannot expect countries in the region to absorb its effects indefinitely. The economic and social impact will seriously damage basic institutions and the social fabric. We are already seeing the devastating impact on children who are unable to access basic education and are losing hope for a productive and dignified future.

Over the past four years, the Council has watched Syria disintegrate from a stable middle-income country to one of ruin and despair. The adoption of resolution 2139 (2014) gave hope that the humanitarian situation would improve. However, more than a year later, and in the fifth year of the conflict, it is clear that there has been little improvement. Non-compliance has become the new norm. As we heard this morning, possible responses to the unfolding catastrophe, such as an arms embargo, a no-fly zone or boots on the ground, have not come to fruition. This afternoon, we will hear more on Special Envoy de Mistura's freeze proposal, but we cannot be optimistic about that, either. We all know what is off the table; the time has come to ask what is on the table.

As the carnage in Syria continues to unfold, the Council must find renewed will to put aside its differences. We must think creatively about the pragmatic things we can do to make a difference in the lives of the Syrian people and those affected by the crisis in the region. New Zealand will continue to work with Jordan and Spain, as co-penholders on Syrian humanitarian issues, to pursue concrete action on medical neutrality, humanitarian access to besieged areas and other options outlined by Under-Secretary-General Amos this morning. We encourage fellow Council members to join us in doing so.

The terrible situation in Yarmouk has served to remind us why wider action on humanitarian access to the 440,000 people trapped in besieged areas throughout Syria is so important. As well, as we heard this morning, the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2015/264) informs that only 0.3 per cent of besieged areas had access to medical assistance in March. That is completely unacceptable.

In eastern Ghouta, 10 patients have died due to a lack of dialysis equipment, with remaining supplies

expected to run out in the next few weeks, thus threatening the lives of 23 more patients awaiting treatment. That is why we support calls that, as a concrete step, the Council should request the Secretary-General to conduct a humanitarian assessment mission to besieged areas and report its findings to the Council as soon as possible.

Many here will recall that before there was Security Council action on chemical weapons and on cross-border humanitarian access, it was all deemed too hard. Yet, still, progress was made. Let us do the same with other aspects of resolution 2139 (2014).

Donors have been generous in responding to humanitarian appeals. Neighbouring countries' attempts to alleviate the consequences of the conflict are to be saluted. However, a lasting solution will be found only by addressing the root causes of the conflict and finding a sustainable political solution.

Today's presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/10) demonstrates that the Council can speak with one voice on Syria. Now it is time for Council members to act with unanimity.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): Let me first thank the Jordanian presidency for organizing this necessary debate. I also thank all of the briefers — Ms. Valerie Amos, Mr. António Guterres, Ms. Ertharin Cousin and Ms. Angelina Jolie Pitt — for their poignant statements. There is no doubt: the Syrian tragedy is like a black hole that relentlessly obliterates human life and sets back all of our values. The civilian population is the primary victim of the conflict, which each day reveals new horrors, fuels extremism and marks the return of barbarity. The numbers speak volumes: since the conflict began, 220,000 people have been killed, 12.2 million are in need of humanitarian assistance, half of the Syrian population have fled their homes and at least 3.9 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

I commend the considerable efforts made by Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey — as well as by Iraq and Egypt — to host Syrian refugees. Those countries have been directly affected by the conflict. For them, the ongoing flow of refugees is a veritable tidal wave — socially and economically — and very often places additional pressure on their social services and natural resources. That is why we have an obligation to act.

France welcomes the success of the Kuwait conference, where donors mobilized $3.6 billion. But the humanitarian response plan for 2015 is currently covered only up to 16 per cent. It is therefore important that the pledges made be promptly disbursed, which will help in tackling the urgent needs of the United Nations agencies in Syria and in the neighbouring countries.

Beyond the financial means, however, which we must meet collectively, there is the crucial issue of access to people in need, which continues to deteriorate in Syria. The Syrian regime has the primary responsibility in that regard. It continues to deliberately target civilians, to pursue a deliberate siege strategy and to impose all types of obstacles on the delivery of humanitarian assistance, in direct violation of international humanitarian law.

In its national capacity, France has fully mobilized to support Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, French humanitarian aid amounted to €18 million for Lebanon, €18.5 million for Jordan, €3.8 million for Turkey and €2 million for Iraq. The aid is intended for Syrian refugees as well as for host communities, which bear the brunt of the massive increase in population. For example, in Lebanon, France's support to host communities amounts to more than €12 million, primarily via the trust fund of the World Bank. A significant part of our assistance will also support the work of the World Food Programme in the region. Faced with the growing challenge of educating millions of Syrian children, France will also contribute to scholastic programmes of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon, and those of UNICEF in Jordan. Finally, we will continue to host Syrians on our territory, as we have done since the beginning of the crisis, in response to the appeal of UNHCR.

Moreover, it is essential to bolster the link between humanitarian aid and development policies. France responds to that challenge by funding development projects aimed at supporting host communities and enabling refugees to not only survive, but to live in decent socioeconomic conditions. All countries and development actors must mobilize to meet this challenge.

As mentioned by French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius at the ministerial meeting of the Security Council on 27 March (see S/PV.7419), our collective efforts must

also allow those exiled, especially victims of ethnic and religious violence, to return home in safety and dignity.

However, all efforts come up against the absence of a political solution to the conflict. As long as the conflict persists, along with its burden of barbarities, our efforts are simply a drop in the bucket. That is the reason that the best assistance we can provide to the Syrian people is to put an end to this heinous conflict. It is a difficult path, but a familiar one, with an inclusive political solution based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). Only a transition that safeguards the Syrian State and protects its minorities — without Bashar Al-Assad — will generate a solution capable of halting the conflict and quelling extremism in the long term. For many months, France has spared no effort in appealing for a renewed political process under the aegis of the United Nations. Only the United Nations has the legitimacy to restart a dialogue on the basis of the Geneva communiqué, which is the only internationally agreed basis defining the crucial parameters of a lasting political solution. France welcomes Staffan de Mistura's initiative to hold consultations in that regard, and is ready to lend its full support. Let us collectively rise to meet our responsibilities. We simply cannot fail.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the Jordanian presidency for its initiative in convening today's meeting. We also thank Foreign Minister Judeh for presiding over today's meeting during his visit to New York.

China has listened attentively to the briefings by Under-Secretary-General Amos, High Commissioner Guterres, Special Envoy Jolie Pitt and Executive Director Cousin.

The Syrian crisis has now entered its fifth year. Over the past four years, war has been waged in Syria, resulting in profound suffering to vast numbers of civilians, in particular vulnerable groups such as women and children, and leading to serious consequences, including a deteriorating humanitarian situation and an exploding number of refugees.

Presently, the Syrian crisis has expanded well beyond its domestic borders, thus posing a serious threat to the peace and stability of its neighbouring countries and the region at large. The international community has made unremitting efforts to address the grim security and humanitarian situation in Syria. Its neighbours — Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt — have accepted nearly 4 million Syrian refugees and provided them with basic services. The United Nations and other humanitarian agencies have overcome myriad difficulties in conducting humanitarian relief operations in Syria and the neighbouring countries, in an effort to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. International donors have been most generous in lending support to the relevant countries and the United Nations. Last month, at the Syrian humanitarian assistance donor conference held in Kuwait, donors pledge contributions totalling $3.6 billion. China appreciates those efforts.

Rome was not built in a day. For the Syrian crisis to develop into what it has become today is the result of a combination of convoluted factors involving historical grievances and present-day frictions. Therefore, a solution simply cannot be found overnight. The international community should take a comprehensive approach to try to find a practical, feasible and long-lasting solution — one that tackles both the symptoms and root causes and mitigates the pressures and the burdens on Syria, its neighbours and the Middle East region. For that purpose, China wishes to make the following three points.

First, the top priority is to step up assistance, based upon the needs of host countries. At present, the Syrian humanitarian situation is continuing to deteriorate. Syria and its neighbours have increasing needs for humanitarian assistance. The range of that assistance has expanded from the traditional forms — material and funding — to infrastructure, education, social order, border control and so forth. In accordance with the priorities as decided by the host countries, the international community should extend targeted support, to match the needs of the host countries, with an eye on coordination. The assistance efforts of the international community should abide by the guiding principles of the United Nations on humanitarian relief, while respecting the will of the host countries. China calls upon the donors to promptly honour their commitments in full so as to mitigate the pressures resulting from the shortage of funds facing the United Nations.

Secondly, pushing for a political solution to the Syrian question is the fundamental way out. The international community should unswervingly pursue a political solution, give full play to the mediation of the United Nations as the main channel, and lend full support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and his Special Envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, in their

mediation efforts, while promoting an immediate end to hostilities and violence among the Syrian parties. Through negotiations and dialogue, a middle way should be found that is in keeping with the circumstances in Syria, while accommodating the various interests, thereby providing a definitive solution to the Syrian question. During this process, it is imperative to consistently comply with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as the basic norms governing international relations, while maintaining the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

Thirdly, stepping up counter-terrorism efforts is key. Lately, terrorist organizations and extremist forces have been ravaging and wreaking havoc in Syria and other countries, harming and killing people while deliberately blocking the delivery of humanitarian assistance and interrupting the implantation of ceasefire agreements. As such, they have become the main reason for the deteriorating situation in Syria. The international community should give full play to the central role of the United Nations and the Security Council while categorically stepping up its efforts to roll back and fight against terrorism.

China attaches great importance to the humanitarian situation in Syria. We sympathize with the Syrian people for their suffering. Through various channels and in various ways, we have extended material and cash support to the Syrian people, including assistance for refugees outside Syria, in amounts totalling over ¥230 million. In accordance with the developments in the situation and actual needs, China will continue to lend assistance to the Syrian people, including Syrian refugees outside the country, to the best of its ability. Together with the international community, we will vigorously push for a political solution to the Syrian question and contribute to realizing a comprehensive, sustainable and proper solution to it.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): I would like to thank the Jordanian presidency for convening this briefing on the situation in Syria and its neighbourhood. I also thank the briefers for their passionate contributions.

In 2014, the number of people forcibly displaced reached the highest total recorded since the Second World War, a staggering 51.2 million. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres called it a quantum leap in forced displacement in the world. Destitute, desperate people trying to escape extreme poverty, persecution and war pay thousands of hard-earned dollars to traffickers to be loaded onto cattle ships, shoddy boats and crumbling barges, only to find death in the middle of the Mediterranean. Images of capsized boats and boats abandoned midway by the traffickers have become almost daily news. Last year alone some 3,500 died trying to reach the other shore.

Among those trying to escape, conflict-affected Syrians account for about a third. Even more Syrians flee to neighbouring countries or remain inside Syria, trapped by the Government's barrel bombs, mortar fire and shelling and suffering chlorine attacks and the brutality of terrorist groups, in hard-to-reach or besieged areas, constrained to survive on tree bark, grass and leaves and occasional humanitarian deliveries.

At this time and day in the twenty-first century, starvation and death by starvation are not something we read in history books, it is a reality for those trapped in besieged areas. Twice this month we have spoken about Yarmouk, where when aid even reaches people, 400 calories per day are allotted to them, well below even the most minimal nutritional requirements. Aid deliveries have not been seen in Darayya since October 2012, in eastern Ghouta since January of this year, and in Mouadamiya for over a year. It is frightening to even try to imagine how people survive there.

The Syrian Government's failure to protect its own population is astounding. Bureaucratic and other obstacles compound the humanitarian suffering. Ms. Valerie Amos has spoken repeatedly about the obstacles, and she did so again today very eloquently.

Just recently, nine World Health Organization requests to deliver assistance to locations in Aleppo, Dar'a, rural Damascus, Idlib and other areas have gone unanswered. Last month, United Nations agencies were able to reach only 4 per cent of the people under siege with food, and only 0.3 per cent with health assistance. More than 60 per cent of hospitals have been damaged or destroyed; doctors have fled or been killed. Even the very basic services are often unavailable. The regime continues to systematically remove surgical supplies and other necessary items, including, as we have heard today, even polio vaccines — what harm does polio vaccine do to any one? — from humanitarian aid. Why?

The shameful constraints imposed on humanitarian operations and the attacks on humanitarian and medical workers are a clear breach of international humanitarian law and show blatant disregard for resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). If the Security

Council does not take its own resolutions seriously, how can it expect others to implement them? The Council must be firm in its demand for the full implementation of the relevant resolutions and seek accountability for the failure to do so. After four years of lawlessness and impunity, it is time to increase the pressure.

The stakes are high, and not only the stakes pertaining to the credibility of the Council, which has certainly been dented by the crisis in Syria. The stakes are particularly high for the people of Syria and Syria's neighbours who have absorbed the largest numbers of refugees. Lebanon, for example, has the most refugees per capita in the world. Jordan must have received 1 million. That is a huge strain on their economies and stability. Tensions between refugees and host communities risk destroying local infrastructure, complicating services and fraying the social fabric. If that happens, the consequences will be overwhelming and spill well beyond the region. Today's presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/10) speaks clearly of these risks.

Children under the age of 17 make up almost 50 per cent of the refugee population. They struggle with multiple challenges, including family separation, exposure to physical and psychological violence, child labour and exploitation, early forced marriages and recruitment by armed groups. According to Save the Children, four out of five Syrian children who fled to Lebanon are out of school. Inside Syria, a fifth of schools were either destroyed, damaged or are used for military purposes. An entire generation is being lost. Children grow up deprived of access to education and therefore of a future — a future that is also Syria's lost future. Women refugees are forced to break with the traditional familial and social roles and become breadwinners for their children in a highly hostile environment and are much more likely to become targets of abuse, rape and prostitution. Ms. Cousin referred to these issues very eloquently. Refugees are easy prey to traffickers and organized criminal gangs; while refugee camps, a boon for radicalization and terrorist recruitment. Given the much too common marriage of convenience between transnational organized crime and terrorism, the risks posed by such extended crises, as in Syria, are enormous.

We therefore welcome the adoption today of the comprehensive presidential statement S/PRST/2015/10, which stresses the importance of comprehensive responses, including sustainable funding; providing support for national response plans; addressing the humanitarian needs of refugees, in particular women and children; strengthening the resilience of host countries; preventing radicalization and countering the threat of terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters.

Mrs. Kawar took the Chair.

As much as we may seek to curb the flows of illegal migrants and refugees, the core of the issue is the political settlement of the crises that plague the region. The only sustainable solution to the current crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, with a view to the full implementation of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) of 30 June 2012.

Likewise, viable political solutions must be found in Libya and elsewhere in the region and existing legitimate grievances must be addressed. We shall choke and run out of funds at an increasing pace if conflicts themselves are not tackled. Inclusiveness, justice and accountability are the key building blocks necessary to tackle the crises that are at the core of the unprecedented refugee flows.

The Council must throw its full weight behind the ongoing mediation and peace efforts in order to change the current deadly calculus. At the same time, it must be ready to use all the instruments at its disposal to put an end to impunity and bring the perpetrators of ongoing horrific crimes and abuses to account, including through the International Criminal Court. Failure to act condemns new generations to a life of destitution, displacement and violent death. Failure to act increasingly questions the relevance of the Council in today's world. Is this a legacy we are willing to leave to the future?

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this debate. I welcome the powerful contributions of Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, Special Envoy Angelina Jolie Pitt, and Executive Director Ertharin Cousin. I am particularly pleased that we are holding this meeting in an open format, so that we can bring greater profile to the catastrophe facing the Syrian people and the region.

The plight of people displaced in Syria and the region is the greatest humanitarian crisis of our day. Four years of fighting have left Syrians among the

poorest, most vulnerable people in the world. At the root of their suffering is Al-Assad's tyranny, exacerbated more recently by the barbarity of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other terrorist groups. In the past four years, we have also seen great generosity — particularly from countries that have become a safe haven for refugees: Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey. I will focus my statement today on three ways that we can support these countries and the refugees who have found shelter in them.

First, we must address the immediate financial requirements of humanitarian agencies and Governments in the region. Funding is simply not keeping pace with needs. There are almost 4 million Syrian refugees in the region. All of them needed access to water, food, sanitation and shelter when they arrived and many need ongoing support. I want to pay tribute to the work of host Governments, to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to UNICEF, the World Food Programme and other agencies assisting the immediate needs of the displaced. The $3.6 billion raised in Kuwait is a lifeline for such work and we are grateful for Kuwait's leadership.

The United Kingdom is proud to have contributed $1.2 billion in recent years for the humanitarian crisis, but more is needed. Donors must disburse their pledges promptly to ensure that funds reach the agencies helping those most in need. We must also recognize the enormous strain that is being placed on the resources of those accepting refugees. The United Kingdom is helping to build capacity in the education sector and supporting the delivery of health and municipal services in Jordan. We call on all members to lend their expertise to Governments in the region.

Secondly, we must do all we can to help those who remain in Syria and work together to bring peace to the country so that refugees can one day return. No one here will underestimate the scale of that challenge. Al-Assad's brutality knows no bounds and shows no signs of abating. One hundred years on from the first use of chemical weapons, Al-Assad stands alone in his use of chlorine as a weapon against civilians. Shelling and barrel bombs continue to be weapons of choice and hundreds of thousands of Syrians remain under siege, deprived of basic services and food. Camps in Yarmouk, which remains besieged by Al-Assad, and Deir ez-Zor now lie exposed to the barbarism of ISIL. Those responsible must be held to account and the situation in Syria must be referred to the International Criminal Court.

We must do all we can to alleviate the suffering of those remaining in Syria. We call for all sides to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law. They must ensure free, unimpeded access for humanitarian agencies to evacuate the wounded and provide vital assistance to all those in need. We encourage the United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners to scale up humanitarian deliveries to besieged areas, including through cross-border routes, and we should look seriously at the further ideas that Valerie Amos set out earlier today.

The only sustainable chance of ending the humanitarian crisis lies in a negotiated political solution by mutual agreement of the Syrian parties and supported by the international community. Special Representative Staffan de Mistura continues to have our strong support and we look forward to his briefing this afternoon. But we must be realistic about the timescale of political change, so, thirdly, we should consider what long-term support we can offer the region. Establishing refugees' self-sufficiency, supporting their education and fostering social cohesion with host communities are important steps. As António Guterres pointed out, new financing instruments to support middle-income countries affected by conflict should also be explored.

The United Kingdom is working with its partners on more efficient and cost-effective projects. In Jordan we have invested resources in water supply and waste water infrastructure, mindful that it will not only provide a more cost-effective means of supporting refugees in the medium term, but also a longer-lasting asset for Jordan in the long term. The United Kingdom also strongly supports the No Lost Generation initiative that can provide sustainable, long-term education and protection to children. We have given $140 million in support as we recognize that the futures of 5 million Syrian children are at stake. We call on all members to work with host countries to support access to services for refugees and ensure a durable settlement solution.

Today is my final day as the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. I want to thank all members past and present for their cooperation, their advice and their support over the past five and a half years. But it is sadly fitting that I make my last statement to the Council on the tragic situation in Syria. It is the greatest regret of my time in

New York that we in the Council have failed to end the fighting and stop the humanitarian catastrophe in the region.

In the past four years, I have seen four vetoes that have prevented the Council from taking meaningful action on Syria. And yet, I have also seen glimpses of what we can achieve when we are united. Three resolutions last year helped to secure access to thousands of those in need from across international borders. It can be done, but only if we put aside our narrow, national interests for the sake of the greater good and the future of the Syrian people. It is this unity of purpose that all Council members will all need to draw on in the coming months and I wish them every success in their efforts.

The President: On behalf of the entire Council, I wish Ambassador Sir Mark Lyall Grant all the best in his future plans. He has been a vital member of the Security Council, and I wish him good luck.

Mr. Olguín Cigarroa (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I commend Jordan's leadership of the work of the Security Council during the month of April. We also express our particular gratitude for the compelling and comprehensive briefings by Valerie Amos, António Guterres, Angelina Jolie Pitt and Ertharin Cousin. On behalf of the Chilean Government, I express my appreciation for their work out in Syria and the countries of the region, and for that of all agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations and their humanitarian assistance implementing partners.

We welcome the presidential statement that we have just adopted on the impact of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and neighbouring countries (S/PRST/2015/10). However, experience has shown that it alone will not be enough to end the suffering of millions of people. As the Secretary-General has said, year after year, the world has watched Syria being torn apart. Syria will continue to be torn apart if we fail to encourage progress towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

That is why today the Security Council has a responsibility that goes beyond the political; a responsibility to call on all actors to do everything possible to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. It is a moral obligation of the body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, as derived from the Charter of the United Nations. The discussion of the humanitarian impact of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries should lead us to a deeper reflection on the scope of protection that refugees require and the challenges that meeting the particular needs of this vulnerable group poses to host countries.

To address this reality is to uphold an ethical imperative of solidarity that should be expressly recognized by the international community, but we must also bear in mind the resources and humanitarian coexistence within host societies. This requires support from public and private institutions alike. The figures we have heard today are alarming, heartbreaking and compelling, but no longer surprising. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, with growing consequences for the region. In 2013, Mr. Guterres expressed his concern before the Security Council at the alarming growth in the number of Syrian refugees, then approaching 1.8 million people. Less than two years later, that figure has more than doubled.

Neighbouring countries have shown commendable solidarity in accepting refugees, a massive test of their resources and their populations. However, this is no longer sustainable, even in the short term, and the effects of the Syrian humanitarian crisis threaten to damage the economic structures, social fabric and even political institutions of these countries. It is also essential to recognize the challenges involved in the coexistence of host societies and migrant flows.

But this crisis is not affecting only neighbouring countries. The recent tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea remind us that many men, women and children fleeing the Syrian conflict chose to undertake such a journey given the hopelessness of their homeland. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/264), in much of Syria violence has intensified, rather than decreased. This factor has increased the number of deaths, injured and displaced as a result of the conflict. We vigorously condemn the perpetration of such violence against the civilian population by any party, which is in violation of international humanitarian law. Those responsible must be held accountable before the law, including the International Criminal Court. We will therefore continue urging all parties to unequivocally implement resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) concerning the humanitarian situation in Syria, and all other relevant resolutions of the Council.

I must address the situation in Yarmouk, a tragic example of how the vulnerability and specific protection needs of the Palestinian community have recently intensified yet further. We share the assessment of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

Refugees in the Near East that supporting Palestinian refugees is of humanitarian, political and strategic importance from a regional perspective. We reiterate our call on the Council to monitor developments in Yarmouk carefully.

Finally, it is essential that the international community support the funding requirements set out in the strategic response plan for Syria and the regional refugee and resilience plan, which seek to address the humanitarian and development needs. However, while humanitarian assistance can help alleviate the symptoms, it does not address the root cause of the disease. That is why we encourage efforts seeking an inclusive, Syrian-led political solution to the conflict, based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex), recognizing the role entrusted to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, who has our full support.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I too wish to thank Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs; Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme; and Ms. Angelina Jolie Pitt, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for their briefings.

The situation in Syria is unfortunately continuing to deteriorate seriously despite the numerous alarm calls sounded by humanitarian actors and the messages sent to the parties to the conflict through the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. We are powerless witnesses, almost on a daily basis, to scenes of bombardments and mortar attacks against civilians, including women and children, with disregard for international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

It is time for all the parties to assume their responsibilities and contain the devastating consequences of their actions —soon five years of murderous conflict — in particular the suffering inflicted on the people, killing, injuring and besieging millions, and creating millions of refugees and displaced persons. In addition to these human and humanitarian disasters, there has been significant destruction of vital national infrastructure, jeopardizing the future for generations to come.

The tragedy in Syria must call on our collective conscience. We must not stand passively by watching the security situation deteriorate further. It is time for the Security Council and the international community as a whole to express its solidarity with the Syrian people by taking specific and effective measures to bring an end to the violence in Syria and to hold the parties accountable for the acts they have committed in clear violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

We reiterate our appeal to the parties to the conflict to ensure that they comply with the provisions of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) by ending all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, so as to allow access for humanitarian aid to those in need. They Syrian Government has the primary responsibility in that regard. We also call upon the international community as a whole to increase assistance to United Nations agencies and partners in order to enable them to reach all civilians in Syria as well as in refugee camps in neighbouring countries. In that connection, we welcome the donor conference held in Kuwait on 31 March, and hope that all international partners will honour their commitments by releasing the funds needed to face up to the increasingly urgent humanitarian needs.

The countries hosting Syrian refugees, in spite of limited resources, must be supported, especially Lebanon and Jordan. That means that the international community should bear the burden with those countries and finance projects already begun, particularly the construction of new infrastructure designed to strengthen the capacity of the host countries. We welcome the efforts deployed by United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners, which, in spite of extremely difficult and hazardous conditions, continue to provide aid to millions of people in need in Syria.

The Syrian humanitarian disaster once again brings to mind the crucial need to urgently find a political solution to the crisis through direct talks between warring sides, with no preconditions, on the basis of the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex). In that regard, we reiterate our support for the efforts of Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, to bring the parties to the negotiating table.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, Executive Director Ertharin Cousin and

Special Envoy Angelina Angelina Jolie Pitt for their briefings.

Today's briefings and the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2015/264) indicate to us that the humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire. The conflict continues to take a toll on the civilian population. Non-combatants, especially women and children, face grave hardship. Large numbers of people are trapped in besieged in hard-to-reach areas. The difficult security situation in Syria is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. UNICEF has been unable to deliver water treatment materials to Deir ez-Zor, Raqqa and other areas controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The World Food Programme had to halt food deliveries to the same areas, leaving 700,000 people without the food aid they desperately need. Nigeria urges the parties to the conflict, as a matter of urgency, to lift sieges and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian supplies to those in need. That is indeed their obligation under international humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Inadequate funding has been a major factor hampering the 2015 Strategic Response Plan for Syria. It is in that light that I welcome the generous pledges made by participating countries at the third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for donors, held in Kuwait on 31 March. We look forward to the expedited disbursement of the funds to the humanitarian organizations operating in Syria. It is our expectation that the injection of funds will in time bring about an improvement in the humanitarian situation in the country. We also see a need for increased support to countries hosting large numbers of refugees from Syria. We pay tribute to the humanitarian actors for their efforts in executing the 2015 Strategic Response Plan. We note the important role that international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are playing in the delivery of aid inside Syria. We encourage the Syrian authorities to continue to cooperate with the humanitarian agencies and NGOs.

The long-term solution to the humanitarian crisis in Syria lies in ending the conflict. That point has been made by various delegations around the table in the Chamber today. We therefore encourage the parties to lay down their arms and return to negotiations, based on the Geneva communiqué of June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex).

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We thank Jordan for convening this meeting. We are grateful to Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the World Food Programme; and Ms. Angelina Jolie Pitt, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and thank them for their briefings. We were deeply touched by their remarks regarding the tragic plight of the Syrian people.

The Government of Angola remains deeply concerned by the lack of progress in reaching a settlement to the conflict in Syria. We are especially worried about the widespread conflict and the high level of violence throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. In fact, the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/264) portrays a situation of tragedy that raises serious doubts whether Syria will be able in future to stand again as the relevant Arab and Middle Eastern country we once knew.

As reported this morning by the briefers, the dire situation in Syria is heartbreaking. Millions require humanitarian assistance. There are internally displaced persons in Syria and refugees in neighbouring countries and all over the world. Many countries continue to contribute generously to the humanitarian effort in Syria. The fact is that the Syrian crisis is the largest humanitarian emergency in the world. Providing emergency humanitarian assistance to 12 million people is an unsustainable effort. We commend the efforts and solidarity of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt for receiving so many Syrian refugees and for their support to those communities. However, the spillover affect of the Syrian conflict is a critical issue that must be urgently addressed, as it has the potential to destabilize those countries and the entire region. The presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/10) adopted today is clear on that critical issue and on the need to support those countries' efforts in favour of the Syrian refugees.

As mentioned yesterday during the very important and timely debate on new and violent extremism (see S/PV.7432), armed conflicts and poverty have devastating effects on the psychological well-being of young people and are breeding grounds for violent extremist groups to spread their ideas of hatred and intolerance. Those terrorist organizations are well funded and have very sophisticated networks for recruiting vulnerable men and women. Unfortunately, Syria has become a primary battleground for terrorists of many kinds, whose barbaric and criminal methods of

war and terror add a terrible dimension to the conflict and have the potential to impede any political and just settlement.

At the present stage of the Syrian conflict, among the 7.6 million people who have been forced to flee their homes, including the 3.9 million who have fled to neighbouring countries in North Africa, are extremely vulnerable individuals. Eventually, many of them may be susceptible to recruitment by the terrorist networks. Thousands of these refugees are attempting to reach Europe, where they seek asylum to start a new life, an endeavour not always easy to accomplish. Many Syrians were involved in Sunday's tragedy off the coast of Libya, adding an even more tragic dimension to the plight of Syrians who were forced to undertake an adventure by travelling thousands of kilometres in search of peace and freedom from war and want, only to meet death in equally horrific circumstances.

The violence in Syria is growing worse; 440,000 people remain in besieged areas. We witnessed the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees in Yarmouk, where water is being denied to the inhabitants, as are electricity and other basic necessities and services. The warring parties have a complete disregard for the lives of men, women and children and the basic tenets of international humanitarian law. The plight of the Syrian people is tragic indeed, and the international community could and should do much more by intensifying its efforts to attain real unity of purpose in brokering a political situation to the Syrian conflict. The international community has an inalienable responsibility to prevent the conflict from dragging on indefinitely, find specific ways to bring an end to the violence and human rights abuses, and to launch a Syrian-led political process leading to a transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and enables them to determine their own future independently and democratically.

It is regrettable that the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to negotiate a cessation of hostilities in Aleppo have so far been unsuccessful. The opposition representatives rejected the plan unless it was linked to a comprehensive solution based on the June 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). We firmly believe that the political track must involve both the Government and the opposition, keeping in mind that ending the suffering of the Syrian population is paramount.

At these meetings, we must do more than repeat ourselves about the necessity of finding a political solution to this conflict. It is time to act decisively and coherently to show the Syrian people that the international community, and the Security Council in particular, have their best interests at heart. As Ms. Amos remarked, it is absolutely necessary for the Council to take bold measures to advance the cause of peace in Syria. In that regard, we hope that Cairo and Moscow initiatives to mediate talks between the opposing parties will continue, and that we, along with Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, will carry on applying the necessary pressure on all parties involved to lay down their arms and conduct meaningful discussions about the future of Syria.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting on the Syrian Arab Republic and the implementation of resolution 2139 (2014) on humanitarian assistance. We extend our greetings to Ms. Valerie Amos of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the World Food Programme; and Ms. Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and thank them for their briefings.

In addressing the tragic humanitarian situation in Syria, we cannot fail to refer to the causes that unleashed the armed conflict and its devastating effects on the country, especially on civilian victims of terrorist violence. In contravention of international law, the agents of foreign Powers have provided backing and financing to armed groups and terrorists to violently overthrow the legitimate Government of Syria, in disregard for that country's right of self-determination. Such illegal actions have also endangered the unity, territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Syria. The existence and strengthening of terrorist groups is not just a problem in Syria. The proliferating actions of such groups affect neighbouring countries and threaten to extend their presence and control over other territories.

Venezuela rejects war, the violation of human rights and atrocities arising from religious, political and ethnic intolerance. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates that the only way to end the humanitarian crisis in Syria is through a political,

negotiated and inclusive solution to the armed conflict. In that regard, we firmly support the diplomatic efforts undertaken by Moscow, leading to a second round of negotiations among the parties to the Syrian conflict.

We also support all the efforts and initiatives of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to achieve a ceasefire, albeit a partial one, in order to open the way to talks among the parties and to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. An immediate ceasefire would make it possible to address the humanitarian crisis and allow a pause for peace and for the political effort. We urge all countries and parties involved in the conflict to support the diplomatic efforts and initiatives for dialogue. This effort should include all Syrian parties, especially the Government of President Bashar Al-Assad. We affirm our commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The fourteenth report of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian issue in Syria (S/2015/264) offers a critical overview of the situation. There is probably no way to describe the suffering of the Syrian people. What is happening in that sister nation is without doubt a tragedy. It is a people martyred by the horrors of war. Our country condemns the massive violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law there. We reject the sectarian violence and the cruelty perpetrated by terrorist groups against civilians in their campaign of terror and their crimes in the territories they occupy. The brutal practice of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) of beheading those they consider to be enemies of their creed is an example of this.

Given the challenges resulting from this protracted conflict, we value the work of humanitarian agencies and rescue and medical workers, and we reject their falling victim to violence. They cannot be military targets. We encourage the international community to promote all efforts in order to stop attacks on medical staff. We also value and acknowledge the work and efforts of neighbouring countries to host Syrian refugees. We urge the international community to support those efforts. We are very concerned by the report's information concerning the recruitment of children by terrorist groups, particularly ISIS, which has opened a school for the so-called Cubs of the Caliphate to indoctrinate and train children and young people to join the war effort.

As indicated in the report, the number of civilians under siege is truly alarming. Some 440,000 people are in this situation, which is unacceptable. In addition, the refugees remaining in the Yarmouk Camp are currently suffering the effects of the strategic alliance between the Al-Nusra Front, ISIS and associated groups, which are working together under the umbrella of the so-called non-State armed groups.

The weak implementation of the measures adopted to control the presence of international terrorists in the Middle East, especially in Syria, is clearly reflected in the most recent report (S/2014/815, annex) of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to resolution 1526 (2004), as forwarded by Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities. The report indicates that more than 25,000 foreign combatants from more than 100 countries have crossed the border from neighbouring countries. The report also indicates the lack of commitment on the part of those countries that have become bridges for terrorism to stop the flow of extremist militants. As a result, it has now become necessary to prevent and combat the presence of foreign terrorists in order to prevent Syria and other countries in the Middle East and beyond the region from falling victim to the terrorists' criminal acts, which are based on ethnic and religious hatred.

We would like to express our gratitude for the data in the report that refers to the bombing carried out by the anti-ISIS coalition in Syria. Unfortunately, that information has not been reflected in previous reports. However, it strikingly calls attention to the fact that the central command responsible for such attacks has been calling into question the credibility of the public sources that have been denying the existence of civilian casualties in those bombings. That is an issue that must be clarified, since those public sources have been the principal sources for the reports prepared by the Secretary-General.

We also assert that the humanitarian crisis in Syria must not be used to promote political agendas in third countries. The situation in Syria is a tragedy, and it should be understood as such by the various actors who inflame and sustain the conflict. The main factor that has escalated and deepened the war derives from the

fact that terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida, ISIS, the Al-Nusra Front and their associates, have taken over the military and political leadership in the conflict with the help and logistical assistance received from foreigners, despite the fact that many wish to overlook that fact. We once more ask: How much must the Syrian people suffer? How many men, young men, women and children must lose their lives? How many more must be martyred by terrorism, until those who influence the conflicting parties understand the urgency of working decisively towards a political solution to the tragedy, a solution that must include all parties?

In conclusion, the United Nations and the Security Council have a moral obligation to work impartially and decisively to seek a political solution to put an end to the war. Otherwise, history will blame us for what is happening to the Syrian people today.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we would like to thank all our briefers today for their stirring and substantive statements. However, we were, to tell the truth, a little surprised that the briefings by United Nations high officials referred to the issue of terrorism only in passing. Recently, the Council has been paying increasing attention to the topic, and we would expect that from United Nations officials as well.

For four years, the armed conflict in Syria has brought the Syrian people untold suffering and has become the cause of a humanitarian disaster. We highly value the steps taken by the international humanitarian community to alleviate the suffering. The Government of Syria faces the difficult task of providing full-scale humanitarian assistance to the people in the territory they control. Neighbours of Syria — Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan — are hosting the largest number of refugees and providing for their needs. Russia is providing the people of Syria with humanitarian assistance on a bilateral basis. We attach great priority to the humanitarian issues in Syria, both within the Security Council as well as on the ground, where the Russian Embassy in Damascus is in daily contact with United Nations humanitarian agencies, as well as with the Syrian Government.

The support given by donors to the plan for a humanitarian response is invaluable. We also pay due tribute to the Government of Kuwait for hosting a donor conference, to which, unfortunately, representatives of the Syrian Government were not invited, even though three fourths of the humanitarian assistance for the needs of the country's population has been provided by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic itself. We note that the Syrian Government recently took a number of additional steps in the humanitarian field. The United Nations received a "green light" for the provision of humanitarian assistance to the majority of the 33 locations that the United Nations requested, except for eight locations. For security reasons, the United Nations staff does not wish to send convoys to five of the eight. In the territory controlled by the Government, there is no significant lack of essential items, and medical institutions are functioning. With respect to opposition-held areas, the lack of assistance for the provision of basic services to the population has resulted in all of the ensuing harmful consequences.

Equally important on the humanitarian issue in Syria is the Security Council's unified approach, demonstrated by the unanimously adopted resolutions and statements, including today's presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/10). An important indicator of such unity was the adoption last year of resolution 2165 (2014) on trans-border humanitarian access to Syrians in need through crossing points on the borders with Turkey and Jordan. Unfortunately, the provision of humanitarian assistance through those crossing points is still very problematic, owing in part to the whims of the terrorists. We call upon humanitarian actors to better coordinate humanitarian assistance with Damascus.

Any impartial observer can see clearly that today terrorism is the essential issue and threat in Syria. It is terrorism that imposes the most suffering on people in Syria. The position of the international community with respect to terrorists is enshrined in resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015). Terrorists, according to the Secretary-General, have been waging war on the values of the United Nations and its Member States. Hundreds of thousands of people arbitrarily find themselves in the hands of a barbarous so-called caliphate, cut off from humanitarian assistance. In those territories it is impossible to truly assess humanitarian needs. The presence of the most odious terrorist groups, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Jabhat Al-Nusra, is noted in almost all regions — Ar Raqqah, Deir ez-Zor, the south of Al Hasakah, the outskirts of Aleppo, Idlib and eastern Ghouta. Recently, the recent arrival of the Jabhat Al-Nusra in Dar'a led to 60,000 internally displaced persons, and in Idlib, to another 77,000. In an attempt to spread their influence, the terrorist organizations are creating alliances.

That is a dangerous trend. Of particular concern is the attempt by terrorists to intervene in the Palestinian conflict, in particular, by taking the Syrian camp for Palestinian refugees in Yarmouk. We call upon all sides to ensure the security of civilians. We support the combat against the Islamic State as well as against other terrorist groups. Only the final eradication of jihadist fighters in Syria will allow normalcy to return to the country. We think that the trend of events in Syria requires emergency measures to ensure the protection of the country from terrorist aggression and the restoration of its unity. Russia has, from the very beginning, called for the implementation of local truces or freezes in Syria. We are convinced that effective humanitarian actions, including those in line with Security Council resolutions, are possible only with a truce. We call upon the United Nations and humanitarian organizations to more actively engage in achieving local agreements and to do more to rebuild destroyed infrastructure and reestablish normal life in residential areas.

In conclusion, I would like to look at the root causes of the problem. We fully agree with those who feel that the Syrian crisis has gone beyond all imaginable or even unimaginable limits. The international community really must come together to solve the crisis. But for the time being, there does not seem to be a feeling of urgency to the task that is shared by all. Some seem to be planning, for the years to come, programmes to arm and train the so-called moderate opposition. However, given current information, there is not any moderate opposition. ISIS and Al-Qaida have taken over too much control in Syria for that. For any conflict, there are two solutions — a military and a political one. Attempts at a military solution in the absence of a Security Council veto was something we saw in Libya in 2011. As a result, the country is in free-fall, sending shock waves throughout the entire Sahel and the North Africa region — and now even to the Mediterranean region as well.

Steps continue to be taken towards a political settlement in Syria, but lack consistency owing to the fact that too many influential actors have priorities based on their political agendas. The Geneva II conference, convened with much difficulty, was halted after just two short rounds of talks between the Government and the opposition. Why? Because the opposition and those supporting it were not happy that the Government of Syria was insisting on the priority of jointly combating terrorist organizations. While such a position by the opposition was strange then, today it looks absolutely ridiculous as the entire world knows about the insanity of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Russian diplomacy throughout the entire Syrian crisis has endeavoured to achieve a halt to the violence through dialogue with the Government and the opposition. We met twice in Moscow with the Government and various opposition groups. Unfortunately, those meetings did not include the participation of the opposition organization created and backed by some influential international players. But it would seem that that was actually the time when the international community could have — and should have — demonstrated its unity in the political process.

But we are not giving up. Our basic hope now relates to the Geneva context, as planned by Special Envoy of the Secretary-General De Mistura. We are giving him all possible support in that regard. We hope that other conscientious members of the international community will do likewise.

Given that today we are discussing humanitarian problems, we would like to express our deep concern with regard to the humanitarian situation in another country, namely, Yemen. The conflict there could become a Syrian one. Over the past month, the situation in Yemen has worsened significantly. According to the United Nations, there are serious issues with regard to the provision of water, food and energy to people. Many homes, schools and medical facilities have been destroyed. Two million children do not attend school. Approximately 1,000 civilians have been killed, including 115 children. I would like to take the opportunity provided by the presence of Ms. Amos and Ms. Cousin to ask for an assessment of the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): The sad images we are seeing tug at the feelings of Syrians everywhere in the world. The political situation is increasingly dire and perilous, inflicting more pain on Syrians, tormenting Syrians everywhere and further entrenching their suffering.

The second paragraph of the presidential statement adopted today (S/PRST/2015/10) states:

> "The Security Council reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence,

unity and territorial integrity of Syria and all other States affected by the Syrian conflict, and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

Those noble words are being constantly violated today by States that are members of the Security Council, whose Ambassadors approved the statement.

Much of what has been said today is important. We heard similar statements prior to the adoption of resolution 1973 (2011), concerning Libya, which, members will recall, served to open the door to the dismemberment of Libya, causing it to become a failed State and turning its destiny over to groups of terrorists who spread terrorism throughout Africa, as well as in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt. In addition, Libya has now become the central hub for gangs engaged in human trafficking. Many have spoken of that fact with deep feeling, and have been right in saying that this has led to the loss of thousands of lives, including many youths, in the waters of the Mediterranean.

The main problem we are encountering today has to do with the fact that some people are exploiting, in an evil way, the extremely painful humanitarian situation in order to interfere in the internal affairs of others. I shall explain that very clearly in the course of my statement.

However, before proceeding with my statement, I should like kindly to commend to all members the second part of a report whose first part I mentioned to the Council a few months ago, which contains the names and photographs of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters killed by the Syrian army inside our country. I have part two here in my hand. It lists thousands of names of terrorist from various parts of the world, including all the Member States represented in the Security Council, with the exception of Angola and Venezuela. This is the "moderate armed Syrian opposition".

Let us imagine that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or the Al-Nusra Front — or any other terrorist organization mentioned in this report — were to storm a city in a country that refers to terrorist groups in Syria as the "moderate armed opposition". Let us furthermore imagine that such a group began to wreak havoc and kill people. How would those countries react? How would they deal with such a "moderate" situation? Would they extend bouquets of flowers and shower them in perfume? Would they provide them with humanitarian aid and medical treatment? Above all, would they in the first place accept calling them — American, British, French or Turkish— "moderate armed opposition"? Would they? Of course not.

What absurd irony it is that those same States turn the world upside down whenever they discover even a single terrorist on their own territories. They also use military force in the territories of other States, thousands of miles away, under the pretext of protecting their national security against the threat of terrorism. However, the deny us Syrians our legitimate right and duty to fight the very same terrorism targeting our people on our own land and within our own borders — not in places thousands of miles away from us. To make the situation even worse, the terrorists whom we target on our national territory suddenly become, in their eyes, innocent civilians exposed to what they call "barrel bombs". Similarly, cross-border foreign terrorism — condemned by resolution 2178 (2014) — miraculously becomes the result of the Syrian crisis, rather than the cause.

Moreover, even today, a speaker described the situation in Syria in an absurd manner and politically immature way, stating that the Government and ISIL were targeting civilians. In that regard, it seems necessary for us to remind the colleague in question that his country's air force bombed a centre for deaf-mute children in the city of Raqqa, destroying it and killing scores of innocent children there under the pretext of fighting ISIL in an open-ended time frame.

Another speaker, a colleague of ours, said that the political solution in Syria must not include President Bashar Al-Assad. However, he then said that his State supports the mission of Mr. de Mistura. That strange paradox in itself shows a lack of understanding of the content of the presidential statement just adopted (S/PRST/2015/10) and a very primitive reading of the current political situation in Syria, in addition to which it violates the Charter of the United Nations, which prohibits States from intervening in the affairs of other States.

Can anybody explain to us the relationship between the crisis in Syria and the presence of tens of thousands of foreign extremists and terrorists on our land? These terrorists have come through international borders and airports with official entry visas issued in dozens of States, including Australia, the United States of America and the countries of Europe, to my country,

with the assistance of the intelligence services of those countries. Some of those intelligence services are quite known to us; some even belong to members of the Security Council. Those facts have been confirmed by the report of the Council's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team (see S/2014/815, annex) on the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters. That is, then, what the Council is saying.

So, could the Council explain to us exactly what the Syrian crisis has to do with the smuggling of all types of weapons from Libya, Lebanon, Turkey and other of Syria's neighbours in the very early stages of the crisis? Is there a relationship between the crisis in Syria and the religious *fatwas* based on a state of *jahiliyyah* that were issued in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other countries on *jihad*, on fighting infidels in Syria and on the slaughter of so-called minorities?

It is not possible to talk about ending the suffering and pain of Syrians inside and outside Syria and about ending the humanitarian crisis in the country while remaining silent about the fact that some countries continue to allow their territories to be used as a base and a crossing point for terrorists heading into Syria. It is not possible to end the humanitarian crisis while some continue to use terrorism as an instrument to implement their own political agendas. It is also obvious that an end to this crisis will not be achieved as long as some persist in refusing to believe that the solution can only come through Syrian-Syrian national dialogue led by the Syrians themselves without any external interference. The sponsors of terrorist groups caused the Geneva II conference to fail and sought to make the first and second meetings in Moscow also fail, and recently even caused Special Envoy de Mistura's proposal to "freeze" the conflict in the city of Aleppo to fail, whereas the Syrian Government had agreed to it in the hopes that it would improve the humanitarian situation there.

Last but not least, is it consistent for certain countries to claim to be eager to improve the humanitarian situation while they impose illegal coercive measures on the Syrian people? Is that eagerness to improve the situation also consistent with the fact that some countries prefer to generously — very generously — fund so-called moderate terrorism rather than fund the humanitarian response plan, which has only received 16 per cent of the funds pledged for 2015?

Some colleagues in this Chamber insist on claiming that the Syrian Government is besieging some areas and preventing the entry of humanitarian aid to civilians there. Such claims are both naive and misleading. The areas in question were previously safe and stable, with no crises — humanitarian or non-humanitarian — at all, until so-called moderate terrorist groups entered those areas, using civilians as human shields, and seized or prevented the delivery of humanitarian aid. Those areas then became besieged from within rather than from without — by those moderate terrorist groups, including ISIL and the Al-Nusra Front. Faced with that situation, it was necessary for the Syrian Government, pursuant to its duty — like that of any responsible Government — to protect its citizens, to fight the terrorist groups and work to prevent them from expanding into other secure civilian areas, thus preventing them from creating new humanitarian crises in those areas.

The best evidence of the validity of what we have been reporting to the Council in that regard is what happened recently in the Yarmouk camp, which some here have accused the Syrian Government of besieging. How could that camp be under siege by the Government when it was ISIL that managed to break into it with the help of the Al-Nusrah Front? If the camp was being besieged by the Syrian Army or the Government, how did the Al-Nusrah Front manage to enter it?

Among those who accuse the Syrian Government of besieging the Yarmouk camp, is there anyone who can answer that question? Is there anyone who can explain to us why terrorist groups continue to get into and out of those areas, including Yarmouk camp, areas that are referred to as being under siege by the Government? Is there anyone who can explain to us how it is that civilians are being displaced from within those areas that are said to be besieged and that those people find their way out, seeking refuge in areas controlled by the Government? If the Syrian Government is the one that is shelling those people, why are those people then seeking refuge in areas under the control of the Syrian Government in order to flee the acts of terrorists?

I would like to explain the facts to those who are trying to distort the situation in Yarmouk today and who are trying to mislead people through their poisonous attempts to demonize the Syrian Government. In the Yarmouk camp before the crisis, that is, before 2011, there were 500,000 people, 200,000 of whom were Palestinian refugees from the Israeli aggression in Palestinian lands, people who had been expelled from their land; the remainder were Syrian citizens. In other

words, the number of Syrians in the Yarmouk camp was larger than the number of Palestinian refugees in that camp. The Syrian Government helped all the residents to safely leave the camp after it was stormed by the terrorists. The Government provided them with shelter and basic living necessities.

The Government of Syria, and not the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs nor Ms. Amos, secured a decent livelihood for the 500,000 inside the Yarmouk camp. Today, there are only 1,000 people in the camp, and not 18,000, as has been alleged. There are no children or women among the residents there. There are only terrorists and some male citizens, totalling fewer than 1,000. They are the ones in the camp today, at the very moment that I am speaking here before the Security Council.

Syria has hosted millions of refugees from several neighbouring countries. I shall not name those countries, as this is not charity that we extend. We have never used the plight of our brothers for financial or political manipulation. We have not established refugee camps along our borders — something that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East have both acknowledged. Unfortunately, however, it seems that some States have not benefited from this noble Syrian experience. On the contrary, since the beginning of the crisis, some have sought to create a refugee and displaced persons crisis in Syria in order to use it as a pretext to exert political pressure and financial manipulation and in justifying their interventionist agendas.

I have already mentioned that the storming of the safe neighbourhoods by the armed terrorist groups is what forced the residents in those areas to leave their homes and become internally displaced persons or refugees in camps that were prepared for them in advance. I say in advance because we have evidence of that fact, the latest of which comes from a recently published book by a former French Ambassador, entitled *Tempête sur le Grand Moyen Orient*. In it, the author tells of visiting Iraqi Kurdistan in 2009, where he saw many camps being built. When he asked why the camps were being built, he was told they were for the Syrian refugees who would come to Kurdistan later. At the time, there was no crisis in Syria and no Arab Spring. There was nothing at all in 2009.

Asylum-seeking and displacement happen only in areas infiltrated by terrorists, as is the case in Idlib and Aleppo and several other cities. The best way to help Syrian refugees and displaced persons is to enable them to return to their homeland by addressing the reasons that led to their displacement or their becoming refugees. To that end, there must be serious and full implementation of resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015). It also requires genuine political will on the part of some powerful Member States on the Security Council to exert pressure on States such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and others to stop funding, arming, training and providing logistical support to terrorists. Would it not be better to spend the funds pledged to the response plan on helping Syrian refugees and displaced persons return to their homeland?

Once again, I would like to reiterate that the Syrian Government is committed to its duties and responsibilities to alleviate the humanitarian burden of its people. We are fully ready to take all the necessary steps at the national level to achieve that. In that regard, we will continue our cooperation with the United Nations and to facilitate its tasks. However, that cooperation is not a one-way street; the United Nations is required to abide by the Organization's guiding principles on the delivery of humanitarian assistance, as set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182. It must also cooperate and coordinate with the Syrian Government on the various humanitarian issues, rather than resorting to suspicion, provocation and criticism, which are fruitless. The United Nations and other international organizations did not succeed in delivering humanitarianmanitarian assistance to around 4 million Syrians per month without the cooperation and facilitation of the Syrian Government.

Finally, I heard no comment or criticism of the relationship between Israel and the Al-Nusra Front in the area of disengagement in the occupied Syria Golan. I heard no comment or criticism of the relationship between Turkey and the terrorists, in particular given that, as mentioned by one of our colleagues, the head of one of the biggest terrorist gangs in the Douma suburb of Damascus is now carrying out a secret visit to Turkey to meet with the intelligence services with a view to perpetrating further terrorist acts in Damascus. By the way, that man is responsible for the killing of scores of innocent civilians in Damascus via rockets and shelling.

I heard no comment or criticism — or even a statement by the Security Council — two days ago (see S/PV.7430) in connection with the Saudi arrogance

and insolence in threatening my country here in the Council, including the intention on the part of that country's rules to carry out in my country the same absurdity that they carried out in Yemen. I heard no one stopping that Ambassador and telling him that he had transgressed the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. I have not heard the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs speak about the barrel bombs in Yemen. Why should Yemenis die as a result of Saudi barrel bombs? Why would the Under-Secretary-General remain silent on the killing of Yemenis? I am not comparing, as barrel bombs are not in the military terminology. But cruise missiles do exist, and they can kill hundreds and even thousands of innocent civilians.

Last but not least, I would like to remind representatives of the scandal of the leaking of an audio recording that took place in the office of the Foreign Minister of Turkey, who is now Head of the Government, in the presence of the Chief of Intelligence of Turkey and the Chief of Staff of the Turkish army, wherein they discussed a plan to order operatives within the Syrian Government to launch mortars against the tomb of Suleyman Shah in order to create a pretext for a Turkish attack on Syria. And what is the status of Turkey's — and neighbouring countries' — implementation of the criminalization of the facilitation of the movement of foreign terrorist fighters into Syria? Is it possible that Turkey enjoys the silence of the Council merely because it is implementing NATO policies?

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): As the subject of this meeting is the humanitarian situation and the consequences of the Syrian crisis, I would like to extend my condolences to the victims and to the bereaved families, in particular the victims of the capsized boat in the Mediterranean who were seeking a better life for their children.

(*spoke in English*)

We, like Ms. Angelina Jolie Pitt, wished that the refugees she spoke to in the region could have been with us today to tell their stories. But let me thank all the briefers for having spoken so genuinely and convincingly on their behalf. Let us hope that the resonance of their messages in the Chamber will be acted on expeditiously.

Last February, as we approached the fourth anniversary of the eruption of the crisis in Syria, I addressed the Council (see S/PV.7394) and expressed our disappointment at its continuing failure to facilitate the realization of a political solution that would put an end to the tragic cycle of violence that has engulfed the country for four consecutive years, leaving more than 250,000 people dead and many more wounded, leading to the destruction of many of the most ancient urban centres in the history of humankind, and scarring the fabric of its society for generations to come.

Two months later, we are back in the same Chamber discussing the same issue, without any realistic prospects for ending the crisis, which seems to be escalating rather than winding down, spreading to new areas inside the country and affecting the lives of more civilians, including Palestinian refugees in Yarmouk. Moreover, the crisis in Syria is contributing directly and/or indirectly to increasing sectarian and extremist rhetoric and violence in the region, adding an unwelcome complication to the multiple political and socioeconomic problems fueling many other crises.

The humanitarian impact of the crisis continues to grow. Today, more than 7.6 million Syrians are internally displaced; 3.9 million are refugees in neighbouring countries. Lebanon, the smallest country in the region, is alone hosting more than 1.2 million registered Syrian refugees — not to mention the unregistered, whom we cannot count — and 350,000 Palestinian refugees, including 45,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria, representing about one-third of my country's total population. To illustrate the magnitude of this unprecedented demographic impact, I shall quote a tweet posted a few days ago by Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, Head of the European Union Delegation to Lebanon. She said:

> "In 2013-2014 the EU admitted 116,263 refugees from Syria. UNHCR Lebanon registered more than 1 million, ten-fold the number for a country 400 times smaller."

In Lebanon, the crisis has had a devastating impact on the security, development, economic activity, social progress and the environment, overstretching the capacity of our social services, health-care and education systems, housing, water and sanitation facilities, and the energy infrastructure. Poverty has increased by 61 per cent, unemployment has doubled and the average personal income of the local population has significantly decreased. In this regard, I call one more time on the donor community to meet Lebanon's humanitarian and development needs, which that have

been identified in the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016, which was crafted by my Government in coordination with the relevant United Nations agencies and other partners and adopted in December 2014.

While we welcome Kuwait's leadership in hosting a third international pledging conference for Syrian refugees last month, and the generosity shown by the donor community, we note that out of the $8.4 billion identified by the relevant United Nations agencies to implement the regional and national response plans, only $3.6 billion were pledged. And, as Council members know, not all pledged money is always actually dispensed.

It is our belief that, unfortunately, tackling humanitarian crises through the narrow channel of humanitarian assistance has proven to be insufficient; hence, there is a need to tap the wider purse of development funds, and we call on donors, international financial institutions and United Nations agencies to provide neighbouring countries, including middle-income countries like Lebanon and Jordan, with adequate development assistance that would meet their needs, strengthen their resilience and alleviate the impact of the crisis.

I conclude my statement by quoting from a recent op-ed essay by Baroness Amos in the *Washington Post*:

> "Countries look to the United Nations to exercise moral authority. Time after time, they are disappointed. They want an international system that is just, promotes equality, champions the vulnerable and oppressed, protects human rights and holds its members to account. In the modern world, with the complexity of the challenges facing us, this is becoming harder and harder. But it is possible. It is a challenge, but one that, with determination and commitment, we can overcome".

Finally, the call on the Council to visit the region was powerfully articulated and reiterated today. Jordan was a pioneer in calling for such a visit long ago. Lebanon and Turkey supported that call then. We hope that, after our deliberations today and in the remaining days of Jordan's presidency, you, Madam, will succeed in convincing your colleagues of the need for and timeliness of such a visit, in the hope that in addition to their political interests, they will see with their heart and listen with their humanity.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): I would like to extend our appreciation for your invitation, Madam, to take part in today's meeting. We also thank Emergency Relief Coordinator Ms. Valerie Amos, High Commissioner António Guterres, and the Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), Ms. Ertharin Cousin, as well as Special Envoy Angelina Jolie Pitt, for their continuous advocacy for ending the plight of the Syrians.

Last month, following the powerful call issued by the heads of United Nations agencies, we all asked a question: "What will it take to end the crisis and the suffering in Syria?" The appalling conflict in Syria has entered its fifth year. Hundreds of thousands of people have died and millions have been displaced. Some, in an attempt to flee the violence, try the Mediterranean sea route and tragically lose their lives.

The situation in Syria has only gone from bad to worse. Three Security Council resolutions have been adopted on humanitarian access and the protection of civilians in Syria. Sadly and frustratingly, non-compliance with those resolutions goes unpunished. The crisis has provided a fertile ground for the rise of terrorist groups such as Daesh and caused the deepening of sectarian fault lines in the region. The grave situation in Yarmouk refugee camp, which has been under siege by the regime, is one of the latest examples of exacerbated suffering.

There can be no sustainable humanitarian solution to the crisis without a political solution. A genuine political solution is the only alternative. Thus, the answer to the question "What will it take?" is crystal clear. And it largely rests here, with the Security Council.

In the absence of any progress on the political front, millions of Syrians are trapped in a vicious cycle of conflict and need for relief. We, as the neighbours of Syria, have been bearing the brunt of this humanitarian disaster. From the beginning of the crisis, Turkey has put the Syrian people, regardless of their ethnic and religious backgrounds, at the heart of its humanitarian approach. This approach is based on three tracks.

First, we maintain an open-border policy and comply with the principle of non-refoulement. More than 1.7 million Syrians are now living in Turkey. Over 256,000 Syrians are registered in 25 shelters. All their needs are provided for by the Turkish Government.

Secondly, we assist the Syrians who live in various towns outside the shelters. We are taking measures to provide them with basic services, including free health care. The temporary protection regulation that came into force last year reinforced our humanitarian response by allowing Syrians to enjoy additional rights to sustain their livelihoods.

The third track pertains to extending humanitarian relief items to the northern parts of Syria, also through the zero point of the border, in conformity with our international obligations and in support of the United Nations campaign. The total value of the aid channelled to Syria through that type of operation is almost $365 million. Also, our cooperation with the United Nations to enable United Nations cross-border humanitarian operations in northern Syria continues. The financial burden of the crisis for Turkey has exceeded $5.6 billion, whereas the total contributions we have received bilaterally and multilaterally so far stand at only $300 million.

The multifaceted effects of the crisis to Syria's neighbours, including Turkey, which has become a shelter for the highest number of displaced Syrians, is increasing. It must be recognized that a just sharing of the burden is the fundamental responsibility of the international community. The gap between the humanitarian and development needs versus the contribution of the international community is widening. The pledges made at the Kuwait conference and elsewhere need to be mobilized in a timely and sustainable manner. Innovative assistance mechanisms, such as the World Food Programme's e-food card voucher system in place in Turkey, requires urgent international support. Scaling down the funding to basic but effective United Nations programmes similar to this one increases the strain on the shoulders of host communities. If not even the most basic food needs cannot be funded, then what?

Addressing the education needs of Syrian children has to occupy a central role in our response. In Turkey alone, there are 550,000 Syrian children of school age, 350,000 of them are awaiting international support for their enrolment. Syria's future cannot lose a generation of children to a cycle of violence. The international community should support this cause.

Lastly, stronger action is needed to ensure humanitarian access and the protection of civilians against the crimes of the regime as well as terrorist groups such as Daesh. Examples of the means and ways to achieve that purpose, as depicted in a recent report by Under-Secretary-General Amos, should serve as an eye-opener.

Time and again, we have stressed at the Council that the current situation is unsustainable, for Turkey and for any other country in the region. The United Nations regional response plans will only be as good as their level of funding. Syrians and Syria's neighbours should not be left alone in coping with the humanitarian tragedy, which requires a genuine partnership by the international community, including civil society and the private sector. That partnership has to include addressing the needs of forcefully displaced Syrians, building the resilience of the host communities and increasing resettlement efforts.

I particularly deny the Syrian regime's baseless accusations. We will continue to stand by the Syrian people, as once more acknowledged by the briefers and others today. Syrians from all backgrounds are together waging a struggle for survival and their future. The members of the Council and all actors should keep in mind that the ongoing atrocities and humanitarian disaster in Syria can be overcome only by addressing the root cause of the problem, that is, the regime's violent oppression of the democratic aspirations of Syrians.

In an attempt to prolong its grip on power, the regime continues to employ all kinds of force and violence through all the instruments and measures available to it, be they chemical weapons, barrel bombs, ballistic missiles, targeted killings, systematic abuse or torture. The international community should increase its pressure on the regime without further delay, so as to pave the way for a political solution, which can be achieved only through a genuine political transformation based on the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Syrian people, in line with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has requested the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am sorry for taking the floor again. It is nobody's concern, be it Turkey or anyone else, to talk about who leads Syria and about the Syrian people's choices, just as nobody has the right to talk about the choices of the Turkish people, or those of any people, of the States Members of the Organization. It would seem

that the Turkish Government has neither understood, nor will it understand, this principle. I will spare the Council the many instances of the Turkish Government's complicity, some of which have appeared in Council documents, in the crimes that have been and continue to be committed in my country.

A little while ago, I cited the example of the head of a terrorist group, a takfiri group linked to Daesh and the Al-Nusra Front, who is now in Turkey. He is planning, in coordination with Turkish intelligence, to bring the situation in Damascus to a head once again. This is only one example. Nonetheless, the most devastating example is the Turkish regime's complicity in the use of chemical weapons at Khan Al-Assal, in Aleppo, two years ago. When we requested the assistance of the Secretary-General to investigate the use of chemical weapons at Khan Al-Assal and to identify those responsible for their use, he replied to us regarding only the first part of our request, saying that he would help us determine whether or not chemical weapons were used at Khan Al-Assal, but that he could not help us identify those who used chemical weapons. That is what the Secretary-General told us after holding consultations with some influential States on the Council.

But now we have the proof: Turkey allows weapons to be smuggled from within. High-ranking Turkish customs officials were fired for stopping and inspecting a truck full of weapons, contrary to the directives of the Turkish President. Trials have been taking place in Turkey, and the media is discussing them. The Turkish regime — frankly, I do not like using the word regime in this forum of legitimacy; I will call it the Turkish Government, not the Turkish regime — has spared no effort to undermine the Syrian people. It built refugee camps for Syrians before the crisis, as was the case in Iraqi Kurdistan. It used chemical weapons and accused the Syrian army of doing so, in order to incite President Obama to attack Syria. That is also what the French did.

There is an important book everyone should read. It was also published in Paris, and it is titled Les Chemins de Damas, written by Georges Malbrunot and Christian Chesnot. In it, they demonstrate the complicity of the French Minister for Foreign Affairs in the use of chemical weapons in Ghouta, near Damascus, in August 2012, at a time when Mr. Sellström was on his way to Khan Al-Assal to investigate the use of chemical weapons there. Mr. Sellström was unable to visit Khan Al-Assal and that remains the case to date. We still do not know what happened at Khan Al-Assal. And now the Ambassador of Turkey comes to us making grand statements about his desire to assist the Syrian people. Is that how he helps the Syrian people?

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of Turkey asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): I will be very brief. I do not want to take up the valuable time of the Council on these baseless accusations. But I would make three points.

First, with regard to the Al-Nusra Front and Daesh, those two organizations have been on Turkey's terrorism list since 2013. The track record of Turkey on fighting terrorism is very well-known.

With regard to the accusations by the Syrian regime, I would like to point out that barrel bombs are being used all over Syria — although the regime denies it.

Lastly, I would like to draw the attention of the entire international community to the fact that the terrorist Abdullah Öcalan was known to be in Syria for many years up until 1998. When it comes to harbouring terrorists, I think the facts are clear in the eyes of the whole world.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.